

CINEMA

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wins hearts**

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CONTENTS

4 BRIEFLY

- 6 **QUESTION AND ANSWER:** Martha Amara and the pursuit of happiness
- 6 **STARS AND BARS:** Nick Cave and the Rock Kids go directly to jail
- 12 **BACK IN THE USSR:** Filmmaking after glasnost

L'AMOUR DE GLAMOUR

- 18 **CONFESSIONS OF A MAN:** What is this thing called glamour?
- 22 **DEGREES OF RADIANCE:** Glamour in motion
- 22 **THE MAN IN THE IRONIC MASK:** Beauty is in the eye of the beholder
- 30 **SHORTS CIRCUIT:** Ruffled Feathers, deep Cenas, Cenas
- 32 **THE SIGN OF FOUR:** Taking cues from Channel 4
- 34 **ROST VIEW:** Channel 4's commissioning editor talks
- 36 **REVIEWS:** Barfly, The Black Cannon Incident, Can't Buy Me Love, Cry Freedom, The Family, Fatal Attraction, Made In Heaven, Mission Des Sources, Rita, Sue And Bob Too, Sherman's March, Tampopo, Flaming, Trains And Automobiles, 28 Up.
- 50 **BOOKS:** National Fiction

VIDEO MATTERS

- 52 **CLOSE-UP:** Jan McBride and The Big Easy
- 55 **OVERVIEW:** They've got the video industry covered
- 57 **ON VIEW:** New releases
- 60 **TECHNICALITIES:** You should have been here last week
- 66 **PRODUCTION SURVEY:** Who's making what
- 74 **CENSORSHIP:** The November and December decisions
- 80 **BACK PAGE:** March and April film buff's diary



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ERWIN RADO

Erwin Rado was director of the Melbourne Film Festival for 20 years (1954-80 and 1983). During that time he was one of the few people considered Australia's premier contemporary festival and one of the world's more important.

The Festival introduced thousands of Victorians to a world cinema poorly represented in commercial cinema: that is, outside that of Hollywood and Britain. His considerable knowledge of the French New Wave, the Bergman-led Swedish revival, the flowering of the Czechoslovakian and Yugoslavian cinemas, and, of course, the triumphant Hungarian cinema of Jancsó, Szabó and Gábor.

Erwin's selection of films, in conjunction with his committees, led many film buffs to renege the event the Middle-European Festival. For those audiences enough to challenge the director on this, Erwin would display all his passionate eloquence, arguing that he chose films only on the basis of their quality, not their country of origin. If it so happened that every year Hungary produced the best films...

Erwin was equally forthright about his belief in short films and went so far as to press the cinema's fever to order back inside those who preferred to wait it out till the festival started. Quite rightly, he recognised the short film as an art form in itself and not just as a training ground for would-be feature directors. (The government budget treated him badly on this.)

In judging Erwin's time at the Festival, it is

not enough to survey the extraordinary number of excellent films exhibited, or to praise the officials who the Festival was run, let alone explain the pleasure it gave to many thousands. Perhaps here another cultural feature, often ignored, and that is the learning environment they provide for filmmakers. Many writers have felt that Melbourne's filmmakers are more European in style and content than those from the rest of Australia. If this is so, Erwin's selection of films was an important factor.

But Erwin was often a more direct influence, encouraging and inspiring those local filmmakers who took the time to understand the man and allow him to be their tutor. He was stern about what he thought was second rate, but praised warmly and sincerely those efforts of which he was proud.

Erwin was also a force in his pioneering work at the Australian Film Institute. In that great Australian tradition, his work there is today little recorded or listed, and, sadly, often ignored by subsequent administrations.

A greater regret, however, is the one felt by many who had seen Erwin's attempt to launch his own film production financed by his ill-health. What Erwin would have brought to such productions — his passionate, romantic vision, his Europeanism, his search for the first rush — could only have enriched the Australian industry.

He is already missed.

Scott Murray



Erwin Rado

France, the 1988 Festival of Australian Film and Video, when plans in Adelaide from 14 to 20 March, Haydn Kramar's *Persecution* and Steven O'Rourke's *Classical Tunes* will have their Australian premiere, and there will be a range of special events and discussion sessions. For more information, write to: Festival, P.O. Box 53, Franklin Road, Adelaide 5000. Commercial success, even if it is related by Boris Film, is described by Dennis O'Rourke as two Janissaries. "The first is that depicted — rich and handsome women, as a luxury ride up the escalators South Street, in the penguin of Papua New Guinea... the packaged version of an 'heart of darkness'. The second presents the real face of the film: it is metaphysical art. It is an attempt to discover the place of 'the Other' in the popular imagination. It affords a glimpse at the real (andly misunderstood or misunderstood) reasons why 'civilised' people wish to encounter the 'primitive'."



The Big Easy

COMPETITION

We have three copies of the video of *The Big Easy* to give away to readers, courtesy of Screen Keys. To win a copy of this 'best sex, less hype' movie, just answer this simple question: What is the name of Dennis Quaid's brother who appears in *The Big Easy*? Mark your envelope. This is *The Big Easy*, Darling! and send the answer to Cinema Papers, 45 Charles Street, Ashburton 3007. First three correct entries will win.

Our New Zealand correspondent, Mike Nicolodi, is unable to apologise. Writing *Les Chénus Papers*, because of increased commitments Mike has large readers in touch with the latest news and developments in the New Zealand film industry for many years, and we are grateful for his contribution. We will continue to give New Zealand regular coverage in the magazine.

Australian short films are being screened on Quince Rights. The screenings, a joint project of Quince and the Australian Film Institute, will reach an audience of more than 100,000. The first four shorts are *Looking For Space Things* (John Armstrong), *The Mugs Adventure Of Terror* (The Cat) (John Taylor), *The Jambik Song* (Clair Bedford) and *The Foghorn Thing* (Mark Osborne).

The British Film Institute's summer school, 'Hearts of the World — Melodrama and Politics in Cinema', will be held at the University of Warwick, Coventry, from 23 to 30 July. It will examine the cultural and ideological messages of film melodrama by looking at its historical antecedents in a range of cultural products: theatre, the novel and painting; the interdependent relationship of melodrama and realism and melodrama's capacity to transcend national and cultural differences. Further information is available from Alpa Patel, Summer School Secretary, BFI, 21 Stephen Street, London W1P 9PL.

The revitalised Australian Screen Studies Association in Victoria is organising a range of activities for the coming year. The first of these will be 'Rips, Whips and Clips', a weekend forum on the cinema and screen pleasures and theories of taste and taste, to be held at the State Film Theatre in April. *Seduction: The Great Women* will screen on 9 April at 2 pm and *After Peter* on 10 April at 2 pm, both followed by speakers and a debate.

Correspondence to ASSA can be directed to Anna Hutton at the State Film Centre of Victoria, 1 MacArthur Street, East Melbourne 3002.

The Australian Film Institute's extensive film and video distribution catalogue is available, free of charge, from the AFI, 47 Leslie La Trobe Street, Melbourne, or ring (05) 662 1944.

Women in Film and Television have compiled the first national register of women in film, TV and video. For more information contact WFT at P.O. Box 648, Broadway, New South Wales, 2007, or ring (02) 281 2038. The register costs \$7 plus postage.



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How did you come to make this film?

Well of course every time I make a film I say I never do it again. But it's actually very much like having a baby. It really hurts and you think, 'I'll never go through this again.' Near the memory of it today.

Anyway, People for Nuclear

Disarmament (PND) were given the proceeds from the sale of a Victoria Cross to make a film. And because of my work in the peace movement I was very interested in the contradiction that exists between the fact that about 60 per cent of Australians, if you pay attention to the polls, don't want to see any country having nuclear weapons, much less using them, and about 75 per cent, sometimes more, sometimes less, feel that Australia must have a nuclear alliance, that is, an alliance with the United States. So I was intrigued about the meaning of this contradiction.

And because I have a sort of psychoanalytic turn of mind anyway, I led me in all sorts of directions, thinking about dependence and independence, nation and personal relations and so on. So, I had perhaps both stirring around and stirring around inside me for quite a while had an outlet in the film. I had originally planned it as a documentary. I had some idea that I would pick up the camera, because that's actually what I really like to do, and I would walk around with the camera and just talk to people of over Australia about related subjects. But anyway it's a very different from what the film turned out to be — a new and different kind of docudrama. And the interesting thing about the film as a docudrama is that most docudramas are acted films which have a favour of documentary. In this film, some of the documentary has the favour of drama, and I think that that's unique.

Was that a conscious decision?

No. Almost to the end of shooting I thought I was going to make the last kind of documentary. But there were so many different inputs to the film that were quite unpredictable — one of them was the camera style developed by Michael Edde — in fact it had a different flavour that I'm coming to be quite interested in.

You were looking for a more documentary style of shooting the film?

Definitely. In fact I felt we would be doing many of the scenes in a sort of psychoanalytic manner, which was something I'd done in 1970, with *Fan For Discussion*, and had been very interested in pursuing ever since. But we didn't. In part I think it was also because of the participation of Alex Grieve, who has written a lot for television, and because he was able to write lines that were very interesting, the actors wanted to use them.

And why did you decide to set the film in Fremantle?

Well there were several things that led to that decision. First of all I sat down with

QUESTION AND ANSARA

Martha Ansara's *The Pursuit Of Happiness* combines documentary and drama, looks at nuclear families and nuclear ships, alliances between people and alliances between countries. Set in Fremantle during the America's Cup defence, it explores its themes through the eyes of Anna, a woman trying to make sense of the lies between couples and nations. ANNA GRIEVE talked to Martha Ansara about the making of the film.



Barry Schabas

Rat Guyatt who worked with me, and later with Madison Williams, and we tried to analyse what we wanted to communicate to whom. And we realised that the people we could probably reach with our kind of ideas, whatever they might be, would be people who were pretty attuned to documentaries. (People have seen it all Jim Davies has made of the programs, you could ever possibly want to make on the subject over the last 15 years in Four Corners). Excellent, excellent films have been made. Also we tried to think what actually influences us. And it can't always just be the facts. Sometimes there has to be a way of presenting an idea that really catches on, and I think that what really catches in my mind was that some years ago when Alex came out I did a review of it in *Finances* and while I was writing the review a metaphor occurred to me, what if the United States were a man and Australia a woman and they were lovers. And if that man dragged the woman all around the Pacific in all these wars and adventures, and while just coming towards her, and she just said, "I want to go with you everywhere. I'll do whatever you want. I just want to be with you," you'd say, "Good, that's a pretty terrible relationship." But because it happens between nations and not between people, you kind to see it through a filter. It's all respectable because it's political, it's economic. I couldn't get that idea out of my mind. And that's why we decided on making a film in which there was a parallel between the relationship between countries and the relationship between people. Of course when you come to actually make it, the parallel can't be very precise. It drifts in and out of the metaphor.

Once we had decided that would be the structure of the film, we looked around for a way to make it in Sydney, and we could not find the conditions that would allow us to write the story and make the film with a sufficient amount of documentary in it. It was hard writing a drama — and almost to the end, I kept thinking we'd made a documentary — if we'd written a drama, well perhaps we could have set it anywhere. But for us we had to find a place where the relationship between Australia and the United States gave us enough of a contradiction in real life in which to put a personal relationship. I'd spent quite a lot of time in Fremantle and it seemed that the America's Cup and the development of an executive but for money and wealth and power, in conjunction with the fact that the workshops were coming in there every couple of months, made the really the only place to make the film. I had some ideas about character and so on, and I went to Fremantle and Madison Williams and I did a lot of research there for quite some time and came up with some more ideas.

Then luckily someone said to me, "There's a bloke Alex Glasgow, he's sort of along the same lines as you." I'd seen *When The Star Comes in* which I thought was fabulous, and when I realised that not only was he the man that

wrote the song, he had actually written a couple of the episodes, I thought that I should meet him. Alex was very good, he helped me out of sticky places and was critical without pushing me about the ideas. We developed a structure for the film together. Then we spent a lot of time looking for people to be in the film. And then with these people and with Alex we had a two-week workshop, where we did things out and then Alex would go home and write them up to try to put together things that we'd done. Sometimes we wrote a sort of a script, sometimes he wrote some alternatives, and then the actors at the time on the spot would work from that script that we'd developed. But although that sounds spontaneous, on a lot of thought and analysis had gone into it over months and months.

And how about the West Australian film community? How did they relate to you as a Sydney filmmaker?

In Perth they are very sensitive, and rightly so, about the fact that people are imported into Perth to make films and the local people don't get the work they ought to get. But we did have a lot of people working on the film, especially young people without the age of experience who were just fabulous. The cameramen and the sound recorders came from the East, but that's about all. All the people in the film were local.

Did you specifically set out to cast non-actors in certain roles?

There's hardly any actors in the film in fact. Alex Glasgow has done a little acting, and the American is someone who is actually a film director who has been an actor too — he's very good — and other than that there aren't any actors in the film. For the latter-in-life we had wanted to get an actor and couldn't find one who could do the job — they were all too English and theatrical and so we decided we would just have to have the real thing. We wrote to Equity about it and they said that for people who were not playing themselves we should have extras. They were very helpful, they understood the nature of the film, and the nature of the film is that no money goes to the production company until everyone is paid off. All the investors are people who we really got in a for the money but for the cause, and any profit goes to the peace movement. So it's a different kind of film. I wasn't paid a wage and Dick Merson, the executive producer, actually held his bit in money. He worked at Kennedy later so that he could provide the film with his resources.

Had you planned from the very beginning to use a lot of news footage?

Yes, I'd had known we were doing a drama we would have had a tighter script. I guess if we had had the time, but in fact all of those things were done after we had done the location shooting. We came back East and analysed what we had

done, and tried to see what material we needed. Some of the news material we had gathered when we were in the West and made into programs already, but most of it we did afterwards. So we had to research all the archives, get all the stuff together and make video programs. I'd never worked in video before and I was a bit shocked at how expensive it was. But again, we got a lot of help.

What about the link between media footage and drama?

People have suggested that there's too much media material, but in fact it's a mere fragment of the programs we actually made. We didn't understand how strong the dramatic side of it would be and how difficult it would then be to insert these television programs that Anne watched. In fact one of them that is 270 minutes long was once in its entirety a wonderful program of nine minutes. There was no way to put it in. I think we'll have to release it separately. We made a nine minute program on the history of the military link between Australia and the United States.

Always we were trying to work out how to balance these things out and it was very difficult because we didn't always have the material in the drama we needed for intercutting with the documentary. Rat Guyatt is an absolutely wonderful actor and we just wrestled with it.

And after this film did you say you were never going to make another one?

No I'm never going to make another one again, for sure this time. The kids look at me and roll their eyes and say "You said that before." But making a film on a very low budget like this is absolutely grueling. It's exploitative to other people — sure they said they wanted to work for basic wages or they wanted to volunteer, but I just don't know. Perhaps if everybody worked for nothing, then I'd do it. Or if everybody could get paid and there was enough time and money, then I'd do it.

How winning the Byron Kennedy Award helped you at all?

Yes, it's been fabulous. I have to think of Byron all the time which is bizarre because I can't say that he and I saw eye to eye when we were in the (Sydney Filmmakers') Co-op together, not that we had big arguments, but the way in a different direction from me. I feel as if I'm the bride of Byron. His came down here heaven and I think of him all the time. That's really changed my life. Thinking of Byron all the time. But more than that, it has a very practical function. It says on all our propaganda, our leaflets and so on "Awarded the prestigious Byron Kennedy Award." And this seems to make a difference to people. At first I didn't know what to do with it, but then people told me and now, I'm not very keen on those kinds of things and I feel very embarrassed about getting it. I feel people want it's really for is for being a good Communist.

GHOSTS

OF
THE

IN *GHOSTS . . . OF THE CIVIL DEAD*,
MUSIC VIDEOMAKERS EVAN ENGLISH AND
JOHN HILLCOAT HAVE GONE DIRECTLY
TO JAIL. JILLIAN BURT LOOKS AT
THE STORY OF A FILM BEHIND BARS.

Ghosts . . . *Of The Civil Dead* concerns itself with the social and moral complexity of life inside a maximum security prison. It is a movie made by a team with almost no previous feature film experience — the key people have considerable recognition and notoriety in the field of music videos. Producer Evan English has been making acclaimed, stylistically diverse music videos for about 20 years (with Paul Goldman, in a company called The Rich Kids). Actor and co-screenwriter Nick Cave achieved fame with his band The Birthday Party. As a solo performer his songs have become the very literary narratives of a wild imagination and he has also been writing plays and a novel.

Director John Hillcoat made short films and music videos and has written two feature scripts. In 1984 he began a correspondence with Jack Henry Abbott, the convicted murderer who became a literary celebrity with his book *In The Belly Of The Beast*. This led to his collaboration on *Ghost*.

The film is not a documentary in any sense, but it harkens to romantic allusions about the circumstances of prison life. It might seem an ugly and volatile subject for a group of people who are best known for putting the visual music to pop songs.

But society has always had difficulties in dealing with people who don't conform to the rules, whether they are criminal outcasts who remove themselves from the norm by aggressive negative behaviour, or creative filmmakers who remove themselves from the fashionable artistic mainstream with an unorthodox vision and methods that can be construed as rebellious.

To research the movie Evan English and John Hillcoat talked to prison guards, psychologists and people who had been to prison. They also made a tour of 15 or 16 American "new generation" prisons that are decorated in soothing pastel colours and patrolled by the menacing gaze of electronic eyes. The prison in *Ghost* most clearly resembles one in Marion, Illinois. "Marion is a Level 6, Federal Penitentiary and it's the end of the line," says English. "It has the so-called 'most violent criminals in American history' What you find when you actually go there is that there are a tremendous amount of very intelligent and articulate people who have violent tendencies who cannot adjust to institutional life. That's why people go to Marion. And what you find there — in line with this level of intelligence and articulateness — is that they are spiritual and philosophical leaders of various sub-cultures. For instance there's the Aryan brotherhood, the Black Muslims, Hindus, American Indians and Mexican mafia. Through a process of what they call 'selective incarceration' potential trouble makers are scooped up and isolated. What you've got in Marion is like either the bottom of the barrel or the top of something — extremely strong personalities."



CIVIL DEAD



SHAPE: Gary Fardo

There are three sorts of prisoners in *Ghosts*, each separated by varying degrees of mobility and privilege. "The first is 'population'. They've got freedom of movement, they're walking around, they're smoking drugs, they're into the drug culture. They've got TV up there, porno, they just shoot up and smoke dope. It's like in *Kids* really. Then in the maximum security you have a fair few intellectuals, a lot of charismatic, philosophically developed people and they have very, very restricted movement, one out of a cell, one at a time, handcuffed, escorted by three officers. Then we have what we call solitary confinement, the hole. It's one long corridor, it's more like conventional prisons are and you don't need this psychological reasoning or anything, you just throw the man in there and lock him away for the months."

The characters were shaped by people that they had read of and met and finally by the people who portray them in the movie, feeding out their roles. The story takes up thematic concerns that come out of the compressed reality that is the basis of prison operation. "It's got nothing to do with going back into the real world, let's face it, nothing at all, and that's what a lot of this film is about. Probably one of the strongest lines in this film — and in the ABC documentary *Out Of Sight, Out Of Mind* as well — is that patently, prison makes people worse," English says.

"One of the contentions of *Ghosts* — and it's a very contentious issue — is that in fact that may be deliberate, that the perpetuation of the criminal class and the acceleration of criminal tendencies via prison is in fact a social device for society. That's one of the film's thematic concerns. And the purpose of that is that you have, to me, halfhearted old clichés, the land owning class and the workers, and the perpetuation of the criminal. The fear of the criminal justifies things like the police. The police are nothing but a social control mechanism to maintain the status quo."

While *Ghosts* was being filmed in October and November of last year in a closed factory in Port Melbourne, selection videos around Australia were banned by the screening of the documentary, *Out Of Sight, Out Of Mind* in which madness, suicide, nervous disease, sexual harassment, drug addiction and a brutal metropolitan hierarchy in an enclosed society operating without self-control, discipline or shame, had broken the human chain in cynical barbaric subside. And most significantly, as Penbridge's John (John Dillane) (a 'new age' cartoonist not unlike the fictional prison in *Ghosts*) five prisoners died in a fire after barricading themselves in to protest that their treatment was inhuman. There is a growing concern and

awareness about prisons, but can a movie have stuff on such potent stuff?"

"How do you turn reality into some sort of dream? You don't," English says. "All you can do is take the bones of reality and, in all fairness to the people who endure 10 years in a cell, what we are doing here doesn't release in any shape or form. You can take the bones of a dramatic form and you hope, you do more than hope, you desire that the final form has significance for the viewer. You lose sight of the fact that this actually happens to a lot of people, rightly or wrongly, and without any morality attached to it. It's really important that if you're attempting to say anything, in some way you've got to have your springboard to reality otherwise it's impotent. The overall intention of the movie is to have an impact, not just in a sensational sense but in a fundamental sense, on those who view it."

Even English and Paul Goldman began making music videos while studying film at Swinburne College, and used crews made up of fellow students, many of whom stayed with them and are working on *Ghosts*. Paul Goldman is director of photography on *Ghosts*. The Rich Kids began making music videos when it was still a new medium and they drew attention to themselves with youthful, lewdish behavior and developed a reputation for arrogance. English's interest in the subject matter of *Ghosts* developed over a long period, while he was engaged in making the videos.

"It's not a sudden development of conscience. I think that a particular turning point was realising what a rat race the music industry was, and going to America. You're a colonial boy from the suburbs of Melbourne and you land yourself in Los Angeles. What an eye opener! We spent about 2 1/2 years in L.A. as well as living in London. You develop as you get older but I guess it does look strange when you look at 'Walk On By' (Jo Jo Zep) and you look at this film. But then in the same year that we made the film we made 'Sensational Sex Strong' (Crowded House) which is absolutely embedded romantic sentiment. It's goofy, who wants to be tied thematically for your whole life?"

"It's schizophrenic. When you look at all the work I've done with Paul it looks schizophrenic. We've made such love stories and the schizophrenic stuff that no one would play. We do like to play games and our videos were about punishing ourselves filmic tricks as much as anything else and doing it in the commercial medium. There were two things that we wanted to learn when we made videos: we wanted to learn how to move the camera and we also wanted to gain commercial credibility and this film is the result of doing that. Our values are as slick as hell and we worked it like a charm. You go to Hollywood and they're amazed and they think that you can really do something. It also keeps them guessing in the sense that only by having the commercial real that we had can you make something that goes against the commercial sort of clichéd grins. If we had a whole bunch of stuff like 'Nick The Stripper' (The Birthday Party) or that, or similar material, they'd just say 'You're a bunch of arty weakies' and 'Fuck off' and you'd never get an opportunity!"

Ghosts features a couple of musicians who have been in some of the Rich Kids' most innovative music videos, Dave Mason (of the Bees) and Nick Cave. "Nick plays a guy called Maynard who is brought into the maximum security unit. He is an absolute psychotic lunatic, and as hell, who spends basically every day of the film in the guards, the prisoners, everybody hates his guts. He's a bad piece of character in a particularly bad time. He provokes everybody. Out of a 10-screen cast only 25 are actors and what we found is that the non-actors are really good." Some of the actors are ex-prisoners.

The marketing of the movie is also going to take advantage of the connection with the music world. Nick Cave, along with Bad Seeds group members Mick Harvey and Rhona Benge, are doing the music for the movie. "It's more music, you couldn't call it music as such,



ROBERTO PEREZ LAMAZO

DAVE MASON



TATTOO YOU Pop Furell

There will be some music but Nick and Mark and Steve's brief is to contribute sound effects, atmosphere and music. There's going to be an album and all that sort of stuff. They're tremendously excited, Nick in particular, about the opportunity to create something totally around an idea that he's taken by. He really loves prison, he loves the really beat quality."

Gleaze was made for the modest sum of \$4.6 million. "What I'd found when we'd made music videos is that I cannot be inaccessible to anybody," says English. "We work best creatively when there's monetary control. That's not just my personality, I think it's a constant that artistic control is economic control, and so what I wanted to do was to be basically the executive producer."

Though Gleaze is a brave and ambitious project, English is aware of the shortcomings and difficulties of a small budget production. "We are talking about a million dollar film. We are making a motion picture that we have less money per minute to spend on than we work with on music videos. We're talking about working for \$10,000 a minute — finished footage — and we are talking about up to \$20,000 on music videos, without the addition of the overhead and post-production that we have here. We're limited by money. We're limited by our own inexperience. We're limited by time."

"The whole thing has been less than a dream ride. That's been accentuated by a lack of money and inexperience: we're talking the director, the producer, the production manager, the director of photography, the cameraman, the lighting designer — we're all on our first feature and that's a lot to overcome. It does show, but hopefully our raw intuition and talent makes up for it in some ways."

"We have made mistakes and we'll continue to make mistakes but you find often enough that people with a lot of movie experience probably make worse ones, and spend a lot more money making worse mistakes and the end result of what they're doing is awful. I think that one of the unique things is that we control our destiny right here, between John and me, and we make the film that we want to make and that's unique. And the sort of family that's grown up through the music videos and out of Swinburne, it's a nice extended family and that's the sort of passion that I like."



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BACK IN THE USSR

How has the glasnost policy affected the way films are made in the Soviet Union? **MARY GOLBERT** who recently visited the USSR, takes a close look at the dramatic restructuring of its film industry.

When Mikhail Gorbachev outlined his 'glasnost' policy for liberalising the arts and press in the 27th Party Congress few realised how penetrating would be its impact on Soviet cinema.

Speeches distained it as diplomatic, if not propagandistic, platitudes, typical of a polished politician. The changes, if any, were expected to be little more than cosmetic.

Since the beginnings of the socialist state, politics and film had been inextricably linked in an uneasy relationship. Party lines dictated policy and vigilante bureaucrats protected the ideological safety of the state with stringent censorship. If party lines changed, art was expected to follow. Those who wished to make bold statements had to remain behind the safety of history, allegory and the classics. Punishment for not toying the line was silence. So, for many filmmakers the course of least resistance was easier. Now the new leader was encouraging a swing so far the other way it was difficult to know how to bridge the gap between word and action.

Yet Gorbachev's speech became the catalyst and official seal of approval for the most dramatic upheaval of the film industry since Lenin's nationalisation of 'the most important art' in the course of the October revolution.

Both Lenin and Gorbachev had shown an acute awareness of the power of film, yet Gorbachev's reform involved relaxation of controls of the bureaucratic film body Lenin had established 70 years ago, Goskino, which for so long maintained a stranglehold over creative decisions, ideological direction, production and distribution. Lenin had centralised the state film machinery, now Gorbachev wanted to decentralise it.

Filmmakers who had long been dissatisfied with what they considered the stagnant state of the art were sparked to action by Gorbachev's words. After all, what did they have to lose? For a considerable number, their films were sitting 'dormant' on the shelves.

At the 15th Congress of the Soviet Filmmakers Union (SFSU) — a body representing the 4000 film workers — they vented their accumulated grievances ('in what could have been 3 on the Richter scale' one of them scoffed), ousted two-thirds of the previous leadership and replaced them with 'new blood'. In an unprecedented secret ballot they elected controversial director Elem Klimov first secretary (head) of the union.

Klimov, whose works had caused clashes with authorities since the making of his first graduate diploma film



My Expect Reached



My Friend Ivan Laptev





Young Woman Waiting For Computer



Younger Day



and had been banned for 25, 10 and five years respectively, was a particularly appropriate choice for the occasion — determined, critical, outspoken, charismatic, and highly respected for his talent by fellow filmmakers. He did not seek the job, and in that perverse way of fate, claims he probably got it for that reason. After the success of *Close And Far* (which won the Gold Medal at the Moscow Film Festival in 1985) he wanted to continue directing again — after all, six films in 25 years is not a prolific total — but the pull of the cause was stronger. "What could I do? This was such an important time — and it might never come again," he recalls.

One of the key resolutions adopted at the congress was the formation of a Conflicts Commission, headed by Perestroika Andrey Plachov, appointed to view previously banned and shelved films and, provided they met standards of quality, to seek their release. The basic premise was that everything of artistic value should become the property of the people. The Commission swiftly went about their task and within a few weeks presented a list of 50 films, the first of which soon began to make their way to the screens.

Meanwhile, promoting a little public relations, the SPU Board invited 50 members of NIPRESCI (an inter-national film critics' association) to a resort on the Baltic coast for a film viewing.

The newly released works quickly attracted attention. *Andrei's Apartment*, an expose of the Stakhanov cult (see Cinema Pages 63, 66) broke all box office records within the first month of release. The Soviet press, encouraged by Gorbachev, warmed to their task of publicising the 'thawing'.

Other previously banned works followed — Klimov's *Andrei and Farewell*, Pavlov's *Theme*, Kim Mura-tov's *Long Goodbye* and *Short Farewell*, Sokurov's *Moscow's Symphony*, Alexei Chumachen's *My Friend Ivan Lapshin* — and audiences flocked in dozens to see them. They were works of quality, but then forbidden that is always justice. People were intrigued to discover for themselves the motives for the shelving, some had been banned for obviously bold statements, others for much more obscure ideological transgressions, such as the negative treatment of progress and technology in *Farewell* or the reminder of a Jewish emigre's creative aspirations in *Theme*.

For some of the filmmakers, such as Sokurov and Chumachen, the novelty of release for the first time was exhilarating. One of Chumachen's earlier works had not only been banned but Leningrad Studios was asked to pay compensation to the state for 'mispending' money on its production.

Meanwhile, the films were accepting prestigious awards at international film festivals, such as Berlin, where *Theme* won best film and the international critics' prize. Other Soviet films were being screened at Berlin, Venice, Maastricht and other film events. A tremendous upsurge of interest in Soviet cinema was taking place.

Tarkovsky once distinguished two types of films: those that imitate life and those that create their own world. Many of the banned belonged to the latter. The censors usually favoured the former. Now, films that once had no audience enjoy cult status for that very reason.

Yet the SPU refused to rest on its laurels, claiming that the quality films were proportionately few in number out of the 150 (or so) features produced each year in the Soviet Union. They expressed concern at a decline in cinema attendances, although these are still extremely high compared to the West. Any cinema that can sell 4 Italian tickets per year (watching 70 per cent Soviet films), and draw 30 million to one of its blockbusters, is

in quite a healthy state, although the admission price is only about 45 cents.

The SPU stronghold was determined to proceed still further. It was claimed that more fundamental changes were needed so that real democratization of the industry could occur. "We want to work on a chain of responsibility but it should exist on all levels; instant restructuring is hardly possible but it must begin to gather momentum," urged Klimov.

As much of the criticism revolved around Gorkin, Gorbachev obliged by replacing the previous head of 17 years, Philipp Yuzonak, with much more dynamic Alexander Karmaliyev (previously from the music section of the Central Committee), a man more likely to strike a rapport with the West. Alex Rudnev was appointed head of Sovexport film, and in so doing the promotional materials began to reveal a slicker image. Editors of major film magazines — *Five Art* and *Soviet Screen* — were replaced by more dynamic colleagues.

Yet for any major reform the entire foundation of the industry needed reshaping and replacement by a new model. At the press conference at the January 1987 plenum of the SPU, Klimov insisted "the situation will hardly change radically as long as we do not radically change the methods of making movies." The change proposed was a complete transformation from a centralized, non-subsidized model to what virtually was a system of free enterprise.

The aim was to do away with the bureaucratic pyramid and through decentralization to allow studios greater autonomy, artisticly, administratively and financially. For an art form that had so long been controlled by state mechanisms it was an unprecedented departure, but one that would "lead to greater democratization, freedom and responsibility for the results" claimed Klimov.

The role of Gorkin was to be considerably changed — no longer censor and script editor but overall coordinator in charge of distribution. Creative units within the 19 studios in the USSR would be responsible for their own decision-making. Gorkin would merely require the subject (to avoid duplication) and a two- to three-year plan so it could work on distribution duty. If they decided a film was an unprofitable proposition, the studio could vote up the matter with a special committee at the SPU.

Each studio was encouraged to form its own model. Mosfilm, the largest and oldest, employing 5000 workers and responsible for one-third of the country's features, led the way in implementing their structure. Drawing their staff into creative units Mosfilm democratically elected leaders (directors and one screen writer) who were then asked to select their creative team from the pool of available filmmakers, yet also encouraged to bring in talented outsiders to work on a contract basis. A creative council made up of the leaders and the editor-in-chief would act as the decision-making body for the studio, though ideas would be discussed within each unit and passed on to the creative council, now made up of artistic personnel only — no bureaucrats. This was indeed a radical departure from the past.

The greatest change was to involve the financing of films. Studios would no longer depend on state subsidy but would be encouraged to practice a system of free enterprise, in which profits from the box office would be channeled into future productions. Studios would enter the marketplace to earn their money and the box office become the main gauge of success. Under the new system they would have to become much more attuned to public taste and promotion.

This framework would particularly suit the bigger studios, such as Mosfilm, which in the past were obliged



Gorbachev and Gorbachev

to donate 50 per cent of the profits to state organizations such as day care centres or clinics, while they retained the other half to cover the cost of filmmaking. Since that was rarely an adequate amount, they were forced to apply for more money from the state, thus perpetuating the subsidy cycle. For the smaller studios, however, the prospects were much more daunting.

Further reforms were still to come. In this more competitive system employment by tenure would be replaced by hiring on a picture-by-picture basis. In a country where job security has been accepted as one of the basic tenets of socialism, this was a radical departure intended to raise artistic standards. Less talented workers whom the studio was previously obliged to employ would be relocated to other work, or teaching film. A Review Commission would examine the situation every five years.

By mid-87 with most of the reconstruction well under way, the Moscow Film Festival (held every two years) was to provide a platform to highlight progress and act as a barometer of glasnost. A record number of delegates and press were attracted to the event, wanting to discover for themselves the extent of the changes.

Though some of these were only cosmetic, such as the reduction of the number of prizes and film entries to ensure quality, others presented marked departures from the past.

The Tarkovsky retrospective indicated the extent to which attitudes had changed. The filmmaker whose works were once withdrawn from circulation and whose name was even deleted from film history books, was honoured with a retrospective of all his works in their unbridled versions. For the first time the festival organizers had selected a foreign head of the jury. Robert De Niro. A record number of Americans attended the event, and international distributors expressed considerable interest in Soviet films.

Appropriately, the spiritual nerve centre of the festival became Don Kino, the headquarters of the SPU in Moscow, where a professional club (PROCL) provided opportunities for foreign and Soviet filmmakers to exchange ideas and discuss issues of vital importance: the role of film in prevention of nuclear war, the future of the art form, women's issues, the future of children's cinema. Of particular interest were the open sessions

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about the state of Soviet cinema, the impact of "perestroika" (reconstruction) on the role of the press in the reforms — in an open informal atmosphere which the foreign press found particularly appreciative.

There was even an instant release of a previously banned film, *The Crossmaker*, when its director, Askoldov, demanded its screening at the forum. The film had been recommended for release by the Conflicts Commission but had remained on the shelf — the festival forum provided a perfect opportunity to challenge the situation. At the following press conference, more personal aspects of "shelving" emerged — the trade for the director who was prevented from making films again and declared professionally unfit by the Supreme Court. Little can make up for those wasted years. The revelations provided particularly interesting insights and concrete evidence of glasnost.

Unsurprisingly, Soviet films enjoyed an unprecedented popularity at the film market with noted sales of 414 films to 33 countries. Professional marketing indicated that the Soviets were eager to negotiate on the surge of interest for their products, though still displaying financial caution in purchasing expensive foreign films. (The vice president of Sovexport, Viktor Khukaruk, explained that hidden costs of dubbing, transport, combined with the low price of cinema tickets, make highly priced blockbusters an unfeasible prospect.)

Soviet, the agency branch of Goskino in charge of handling co-productions and provision of services for visiting foreign crews, reported record interest in working with the Soviets and USSR as a location and subject for documentaries.

The importance of art in political diplomacy was noted with the unveiling of the American Soviet Film Initiative, a non-profit organisation formed between the filmmakers of the two superpowers to encourage co-productions, professional exchanges, research and better information services. First proposed at an earlier stage when a Soviet delegation visited the US in March last year, the initiative reported a number of projects already underway: a television documentary, *Superpower Afternoon*, aimed at dispelling stereotypes between the two countries, a feature about Cherebnyi to be produced by Stanek Kopner, and a biography of the poet Alexander Pushkin. It appears that art was making more substantial headway in diplomacy than political summits.

But despite the progress, there are still areas where reforms have met with less success — particularly in film education and at VGIK, the All Union Higher Institute of Cinematography. VGIK is the first film school in the world, established by Lenin's decree in 1919, where some of the Soviet Union's leading filmmakers had taught their specialties. Through courses in the various components — direction, acting, art, screenwriting and film criticism, and camera — are long and intensive, for some years there has been an undercurrent of dissatisfaction with the standards of equipment, course content (some of which has remained unchanged since 1965), and the quality of the teaching. (Recently, in the 1996 film class, complaints about the intellectual and cultural calibre of the students.)

Gorbachev's policies gave the students impetus to act. They organised a conference demanding changes, suggesting that a system of inviting guest teachers, approved by student vote, be adopted. The SPU, determined that a reform of the system had to start at grass roots, took the students' complaints seriously. VGIK came under considerable attack (even though many of the SPU members were graduates of its system) accused of producing an assembly line which discouraged talent and, at best, resulted in mediocrity.

In a subsequent reshuffle of appointments, Gorkino's

selection of Alexander Novikov (the previous assistant dean) over the SPU candidate was considered conservative. Novikov admits that new staff and equipment are badly needed and that plans to revamp the curriculum are under consideration, but few believe he is capable of injecting the institute with the kind of vision and initiative required.

If proposals to introduce a film syllabus (in cinema history and cinematography) into secondary schools — currently prepared by film critics and educators — are implemented, the student intake of future years may be even more demanding and knowledgeable, especially as many Soviet children are already provided with opportunities to work with film (even 35mm) at amateur clubs and Young Pioneer hobby circles.

Looking down the line there is still much to be done. Encouraged by the achievements over the last 18 months the SPU is proposing a number of further improvements. It is particularly concerned that the reforms be codified by law as that aggression to the previous situation is unlikely.

Certainly the release of shelved films has injected new vigour into a previously ailing industry. Victor Dymov (head of Soviet film critics) stressed that, though relatively small in number, these films counterbalanced the situation at a time when mediocrity was representative of the majority. The shelved filmmaker at least had the courage to prove that it was still possible to make great films and it's only now that the Soviet film industry is being recompensed for this.

But when the novelty wears off, it will be interesting to see the quality of new films created as products of the reconstruction. Judging by those recently released, a number reflect more personal themes and social problems, such as *Lovely Women Looking For Company* or *Messenger Boy*, one of many films concerned with the dilemma and disorientation of youth in a changing society. Will these be able to compete on the international film scene?

A number of other questions still need to be asked. How will the free enterprise system of the studios with the oligarchy with a centralised socialist ideology? It may be remembered that a democratisation of the arts does not mean a deviation from socialist ideals. Can the momentum of the reforms be sustained? Even now acceptance of the reforms has not been pervasive in Soviet society and though resistance at this stage is not overt, in time the appetite may wane.

When will the changes be truly reflected on the screen and how will young filmmakers graduating from film institutions cope with the adjustment? The talent agencies and new mechanisms have been set up but how will these operate? Could it even turn out that repression was conducive to creativity . . . ?

Soviet theoreticians were amongst the first to treat film as an art form. Eisenstein, Voronov, Pudovkin and Dovzhenko set very high standards for their successors, at the same time setting up the tag-of-war between artist and state which continued for more than 70 years. Certainly the Soviets have produced some masterpieces since then — one only needs to think of *The Cranes Are Flying* or *Andrei Doesn't Believe In Tears* — but generally, barriers for filmmakers have been limited by repressive state mechanisms. The new policies have opened the doors. Over the last two years Soviet cinema has earned a much higher profile internationally; at a time when Western film has offered limited inspiration, the lifting of the curtain has released an intense wave of energy after so many years of stagnation. Commercially and artistically, it's provided a simple offering to assess world cinema. Whether this can be sustained remains to be seen.

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What is this thing called
glamour? ADRIAN MARTIN
considers the question.

CONFESSIONS OF A MASK

LET'S think of the human face as a *mask*. Not in the sense, primarily, of a disguise that can be taken on and off, although there are of course many wholly contrived 'painted faces'.

I mean, rather, the face as a special, heightened, almost imaginary sign or metaphor of the human person who 'possesses' it. The language face — the face of glamour. Edgar Morin in his pathbreaking book *The Sinner* (1959) once grumbled over the historical tendency that has led us to invest so much in the faces of others — 'the eyes are the windows of the soul' and all that — a tendency given absolute aesthetic form in our rapture before the screen close-up of a movie star. Morin's worry is valid: something of the full, earthy body — and that body in motion — is surely lost in these ethereally frozen twilight moments of the supremely beautiful human face, images wrought from movies into that even more imperiously perfect art of the Hollywood still photographer's glamour portrait.

Other commentators, however — Robert Benayoun (*The Look Of Better Kitten*), La Duce (*L'Érotisme au Cinéma*), Ado Kyrou (*Love And Eroticism In The Cinema*), Gerard Legrand (*Cinémaisme*) — take a different line of reason in relation to images of screen glamour. Touched one and all by successive waves of surrealism, these authors contributed profitably over many years to that overshadowed rival of *Cahiers du Cinéma*, the

wonderful magazine *Positif*. Inspired by a great vocabulary and more philosopher of the human face, Malcolm de Chazal, such writers probed deeply and fancifully into glamour, grasping the vision as a fantasy of love which must radically be produced through words and emotions, dreamed out aloud.

A veritable religion of the face emerged, far surpassing even the traditional gush of glamour publicity that troubled Morin: a soliloquy addressed in minute detail to watery eyes, open pores, follicles of hair, cheek lines, nostrils. Amongst filmmakers, Alain Resnais (*Je s'aime, je t'aime*), Luis Buñuel (*L'Âge d'or*) and Chris Marker (*Sans Soleil*) paid their homages to the vision. And even as they knew that what they worshipped was a madly unreal and magnified glamour possible only via camera lens and cinema screen, these dreamers still had the surrealist good sense to know that such beauty could be found outside the movies — that it could and indeed had to be explosively ignited within the ordinariness of everyday life. Here as never before cinema came to be the source not of escape but of inspiration, a poetic metaphor of glamour in the service of the world's *amour fou*.

Of course, the fact can't be escaped that most of the talkers in the love game were men, with women (privileged cases: Louise Brooks, Lana Turner, Cyd Charisse, Brigitte Bardot, Marilyn Monroe) fixed as the objects >



of *glamour-as-object*. And it is for this very reason that the game goes largely unplayed today, at least in these terms; history has already embarrassed or accused those men who would favour ecology women in an 'enlightened' film analysis context. Today, the fact that *Pontac* published a 'Dictionary of Eroticism' during the May 1968 riots is taken retrospectively as a cardinal symptom of political ineptness; today, the Raymond Dargaud who once dreamed so eloquently of Greta Garbo is looked over the coals for trying the same with Grace Jones today, even Gérard Legrand dispirits of being no longer able to bear witness to the heterosexual eroticism which led him to the first place in his life of 'cinémania'. When the American magazine *Film Comment* tried in 1983 to celebrate its 'Favorite screen women', the results were indeed largely misogynistic and purrant. A sad end to the ethics of glamour.

If glamour talk still persists, it is in fact mostly under the 'progressive' (or historically sanctioned) cover of man-as-object reversal. Anyway, man or woman, can swoon in print these days over Gérard Depardieu, Mel Gibson, Clint Eastwood or Richard Gere as figures of glamour. Nelly Kaplan (also a screener) led the way (for straight women at least) in 1984 with her marvellous cry: "Is there anything so exciting as a beautiful woman knowingly caused by the caprice of the lens? Yes, the sight of a beautiful young man captured by a heterosexual camera". The reversal of terms and the necessity of choice is itself exciting, playful. Furthermore, a strongly homoerotic, sometimes subtly 'crypto-pay' undercurrent informs much of the older writing on glamour, not to mention much of the work of the great Hollywood portrait photographers: see Rembrandt on Keaton ("his masculine energy") and the 'feminine' Gary Cooper; or the great effluviologist John Kralin on classic 'andrology' camp heroes like Marlene Dietrich or Greta Garbo, his ecology confusing at every step the desperate impulses of love with a melancholic longing for death — and all in the name of a glamorous 'transcendence'. Besides these various shades of homoeroticism, perhaps the 'art house' is the last (looking safe) place where a straight man can, with care, confess publicly his 'voluptuous' estimation of, say, Isabelle Huppert; but woe to that same man if he speaks out of turn about Kim Basinger, Marla Heuser or Madonna. (Shave exception: Raffaele Caputo's "Blossch of Proustine" in *Cinema Papers* 67.)

Beyond the historical limits of what can and can't be said in the name of glamour at any given time, other danger and more personal problems stir — and they are hardly resolved by the foolish exclamation of Marilyn Monroe by Marcello Mastroianni as resident cultural sex object. Glamour images both moving and still have always displayed the tendency to slide from the positive end of a spectrum to an opposite, negative end; but that's not something you can always see, since it has as much to do with the use or reception of those images as with their inherent visual or associative properties. My sense of what is positive and negative in glamour photography is personal — hence not universal — but it is based on an intuition of an (erotic, almost mystical or metaphysical, deep structure) in much writing on the subject: a fierce dualism of living and dead, moving and frozen, subject and object, personality and fetish.

Let me explain. Think once more of the face as a mask, and of glamour as the idealisation of the face, the unbing of a face with soul. Nightmarish: the mask becomes a prison, a hardness and cracks, but can never be removed — that's beauty's curse. Hence, the 'ideal' of glamour is imposed on the star from without, a social stereotype administered by somewhat sinister Pygmalion-like directors, photographers, lighting and make-up artists. Billy Wilder's cinema, from *Sunset Boulevard* to *Fellini*, has provided the classically jaded and insecure portrait of a film world where glamour is all 'image', dream and nothing more — the dream of eternal youth and peace giving way to a nightmare of age, decay and anxiety as lived by the hapless victims of the glamour system, its so-called 'stars'. But even on those who, in real life, don't rise as high as fall as hard as Norma Desmond, the code of glamour must surely work its havoc: living as eternally distanced relation to one's 'self' (presence, appearance, personality, sexuality) through the inescapable cliché of one's 'look'. (How strange, as Raymond Bellour once noted, that the question 'how do I look?' occurs, nervously and manually, not to one's own act of looking but to the acts of others seeing and evaluating an already prescribed appearance.)

'Look' nonetheless resides somewhere else. But where? Glamour's fragile utopian dream is the two-way exchange between a star's 'inside' (personality, heart) and his or her outward bodily appearance — a dream that the soul might 'inhabit' the face and body in its secret, inner image. The innermost face becomes all 'surface', a mask that is too obviously constructed, the spark of image which is glamour immediately flickers out. In all those glamorous images which really touch us, we

experience that profound intimation of the invisible soul, the soul made flesh. But who can determine, finally, whether this is anything more than pure hallucination? Can I really claim to know Cary Grant's 'soul' through looking at his unsmiling portrait? Is it all just another movie-land con-job, the ultimate emotional sweet cheat?

Yet still the search for true glamour continues — a truth which would not be heavily visible, but more fleeting, hidden, ephemeral, poignant. Once cliché notions of beauty are cast out from the lover's gaze, what does he or she see in the most precious glamorous person? Alfred Appel Jr speaks of those fragile 'signs of life' (in his book of the same name) that undo the glossy perfection of glamour: portulaca and introduce a moment of true human feeling — signs of age, worry, strain, distant reflectiveness (as in a celebrated 1932 shot of Buster Keaton by Clarence Sinclair Bull). Appel privileges and values those elements in glittering photography which resist or even subvert the genre's wholesale tendency towards being death — subjects who find themselves unsmilingly frozen, enchained and objectified by the art of petrification. Veronica Lake in a 1936 portrait is, for Appel, "shocking her pulse as the coronal artery, to be certain that her inhibition of the submissive doll in the male supremacy fantasy has not gotten out of hand . . . has she been poised to death?"

Like Richard Dyer who, in his book on photography *Common Places*, privileged what he called the *punctum* (the strange, memorable, individual affect) over the *studium* (everything which is cliché or conventional), Appel seeks out in his chosen images what is whimsical, imperfect, parodic — and also again homoerotic, since he (like others) regards a subconscious gay sensibility as having totally rocked the Hollywood facade of heterosexual glamour from within. He is fond of 'tinged', obscure, outry, fading images (like a Philippe Halsman snap of Myra Marlinn against a very ordinary door) — those that betray tell-tale signs of life, and which, in retrospect, indicate the coming historical moment when the 'great days of glamour' would end, and other more 'banal' photographic practices (like the domestic snapshot or the journalistic news photo) would come to be created as, in their own way, magical. For 'everyday life' is that arena in which people and things happily move, change all perish — and photography should not want to freeze them for evermore.

But is glamour really dead? For a stern aficionado like Kohal, it did wye back in the

1960s "something that had been intensely powerful became something that was too bright, too cheery, and ultimately empty" (*The Art Of The Great Hollywood Portrait Photographers*). A gradual loss both of total aesthetic mastery (of artist over model) and a proper tone of solemnity meant (by the end of the spell of glamour, in his account). But perhaps what Kohal values is precisely that tendency to 'make over' living, moving, individual subjects into constant objects, pure fictions. And perhaps the 'soul' he sees, the magic he projects, is the least truly soulful or magical.

Let's return one last time — with all due historical allowances for heterosexist bias — to that heady team of Kyros, Benayoun, Lagrand, and their friends on *Posey*. It seems to me these guys really knew something about soul. Their posite was not some sophisticated pre-life/sex-glamour equivalent like Appel's, on the contrary, they embraced the cliche, the cliché and rituals of the glamour show. Through arresting that cliché with more love and intensity than is ever strictly required, they turned the 'fair' posite right around from passivity to total delirium. Not for them the paragon of Kohal's everyone, from Theda Bara to Jerry Lewis, could be doubly truly, stunningly beautiful. Yet these fans always carried a certain affectionate disdain, a vigilance of the seeing beam: their cameras didn't really project a fantasy onto a flesh object, rather they tried to draw out and magnify every physical and behavioural peculiarity of the ever elusive, ever mysterious subject of their mad desire. Both raptured and humble, they watched the screen or posed over cliffs in total awe — and in the explosive point of contact between what the star actually projected and what the fan longingly invented, a soul was born.

The *Posey* crew knew something that too many of us forget too quickly: that the cinema is bigger than we are, that we are taken up in it, moved and transformed by it just as we move and transform it. Glamour, at its highest point, can be part of this dizzy scenario of two-way exchange. As the cinema, we are privileged to receive the confessions of masks, then such masks (which ultimately disappear back into shadow) and we might see in the screen-mirror that we too are masks, souls, shadows, free to invent ourselves. At the end of such an intimation, we might also realize (as did the surrealists) that the cinema of glamour is thus the perfect metaphor for what is possibly the only thing greater than love — death, mad love, another terrain where masks combine to and transform each other constantly.



DEGREES OF RADIA

PETER KEMP examines



You've made my life so glamorous
You can't blame me for being nervous
Can't it be wonderful 'a movie-star'!
That you should care for me!
Gorgeous and too lovely
To be wonderful' sung by Audrey
Hepburn in *Birds in the Hand* as
Funny Face (1957)

I have star/business and I love it. I love
working with actors and dancers and writers
and designers. I think they're the most
beautiful, talented and witty people in the
world. But I have the hubbbs, the Beverly
Hills home with swimming pools. I have
Mitsouko, I have Givenchy bags, I have all of
that shit.

Rob Stone (interviewed by Howard
Stern in "Life As A Long
Rehearsal" *Los Angeles Times*,
November 1978)

THE OXFORD English Dictionary tells us
that *glamour* is "A magical or fictitious
lurency attaching to any person or object, a
delusive or alluring charm." Introduced into
the language during the early 18th century, the
word was originally coined to compare, in the
act of enchantment, those qualities pertaining
to spells, trickery, deceit.

However, with the introduction and
development of photography (particularly
fashion photography) and the cinema, it
would appear that the meaning of *glamour* has
been modified and extended to evoke not the
enchanting process but rather one of the
sublime effects of what cameras can produce
in the frozen or moving image.

Through the tricks and rules of technology
and the ways light and shade may be
artificially adjusted and re-adjusted, the
magical instant becomes a perpetual instant,
manifestly there for all time, for all to behold.

GLAMOUR

Astaire, Fosse and Hollywood glamour

Pictures beauty was presented in snapshots and movieframes as beguiling fact. Charming delusion was transformed into forever charming illusion. And the all-enfolding turn to signify a certain heightened, heightened attractiveness, peculiar to meniscoid/ve photogenic, was Glamour. Glamour — no longer a special effect but the enervating, splendid result, the shining net outcome of many special effects.

Glamour and, more specifically, Hollywood Glamour, was, and enduringly still is, Glenn Swanson, Rudolph Valentino, Greta Garbo, Cary Grant, Marlene Dietrich, Tyrone Power, Kay Francis, Joan Crawford, Charles Boyer, Constance Bennett, George Raft and a galaxy of other male and female bodiles, whose faces and figures "look" as a uniquely fabulous mirror to the Dream Factory's bling lights.

The fortuitous response of any being to the play of half shade and filter shadow across his or her bodily contours not only determines the shape and form of that entity's glamour potential but also further emphasises a scientific/poetic relationship between glamour and various properties of light. Attributes often associated with the special impact of glamour are: lustre, sheen, sparkle, glitter, glow. And it is precisely through the phenomenology of the camera's technical and chemical reactions that some Hollywood stars shine with glamour and others don't.

Glamour should not be confused with energy, talent, style, charisma, sex appeal or even beauty, though in many scores performance glamour co-exists with all or some of these qualities. Glamour neither promises nor provides greatness or popularity. It simply is and you've either got it or you haven't got glamour.



Shirley Maury (c. 1940)

If stars can look or be glamorous (as made evident by movie stills, photo pin-ups, video press buttons or the interpretative freeze frames of memory), then surely a number of them can behave and move glamorously as well. The Katharine Hepburn camera, the Cary Grant camera, the Mae West camera, the Errol Flynn camera, the Bette Davis camera, the Ava Gardner camera (not provide distinguishing kinetic signatures that complement the distilled glamour of posed portraits). Furthermore, if glamour on screen is characterized as a kind of glimmering surface veneer or topical polish emanating from people, things or places, then maybe this definitive dependence on lighting variables can be inflicted to help create different types, diverging schools of glamour that could range from Bright and Debonair through to Dark and Dramatic.

Probably the most generally pitched, corporately stylised, usually concentrated and expressively ebullient of film genres is the

- musical, which might be alternatively regarded as Glamour in Motion.

The death last year of actor-dancer Fred Astaire (born 1899) and actor-dancer-choreographer-director Bob Fosse (born 1927) robbed the film world of two angular musicians of the movie musical, each a visionary practitioner who shaped, sharpened and shifted the elements of song and dance to yield forth much more than just a decorative style or attitude.

Fred's flair and Bob's brilliance fashioned unique universes, individual realms of colour, line, mood and movement which we could separately label *Astaire Glamour* and *Fosse Glamour*. Both artists perform as really apposite muscats for an Astaire-Bright/Fosse-Dark Glamour dichotomy yet Astaire is not without his melancholy nor is Fosse entirely bereft of optimism or transcendence.

Nobody proves the you-don't-have-to-be-beautiful-to-be-glamorous maxim quite so cogently as Fred Astaire. Not until *Barbra Streisand* is there a plainer-faced contender who triumphs as the leading film musical performer of a generation.

Through a seasoned success on Broadway and in the West End (sponsored by his sister Adele), Fred auditioned solo for Hollywood in 1933, exhibiting that first-class nondescriptness that is said to have prompted one myopic movie mogul to note "Can't act. Can't sing. Balking. Can dance a little."¹ Producer David O. Selznick's astute reply to this initial snub reads: "I am a little uncertain about the man but I feel, in spite of his enormous ears and bald chin line that his charm is so tremendous that it comes through even in the worsted suit."²

And come through it did, gloriously and gleefully. Fred went on to star in a series of nine black and white RKO dance musicals with Ginger Rogers which Pastiche Kael describes as "the most exquisite courtship rites the screen has ever known".³ These are films distinguished by what Daniel Thomson succinctly terms as "those intimate, but sophisticated conversational dances, where hard heels and gleasy floors speak of bliss".⁴

The sleek Astaire-Rogers vehicles of the 1930s with their jolly celebrated Van Nest Polglase Big White Setts constitute a perfect pinnacle of Hollywood glamour. The films positively flamenco with that all important light, sculpting Art Deco-mad fantasies which Thomson calls as "glitz with glitz, polished floors, tuxa dresses, collared cowans flowers and Astaire's hairysk".⁵

Fred's marvellous poising and sartorial sense enhance his rake-like frame which struts out such a piqued of male slenderness as to seem almost achingly neuter. But that big irresistible grin twinkles with boyishness and the plaintive silver tenor voice tones off lyrics by Gershwin, Berlin and Porter with an occasional catch of ardent and dash of deep yearning. And when Astaire guides a female partner in dance, it's clear that is a man who enjoys and salutes the principles and conventions of heterosexual romance where He Loves and She Loves, Fated to be Mated, Clerk to Clerk, Night and Day.

The 'Night and Day' number is featured in the very first Fred Astaire movie I remember ever seeing, *The Gay Divorcee* (1934) and my 14-year-old eyes were, even then, astonished by the haunting, heart-breaking pleasure of it all.

Ginger in frothy snow evening gown, backing off from, and eventually succumbing to, a persistently advancing Fred in white tie and tails, as to the rhythms, relentless throb of Cole Porter's classic love song. Contact. Recline. Contact. Recline. Contact. Contact. Contact. Contact. Wew. One of those moments when you know that you love movies if this is what movies can do.

Another equally arresting kind of glamour conceived from components of the Hollywood musical left me gasping in mid-adolescence when those hairy dance-hall flowers bring over the milk and clicked their fingers in the 'Hill Big Spazzer' routine from Bob Fosse's *Sweet Charity* (1969).

No sweat, ballroom dress here. No tully



Top: Peter

cliffed heads held in neutral stance. He heli-sky looking onto a neonlit sea. Instead, glitz, figure-clinging miniskirts, garishly over-made up female faces, crowned by monstrous buns belched all arranged into a cane-hutcher tableau of gaudy-mag posturing. Fred's progressive winking and winking of Ginger feels fairly remote from the dull, all too-up of tanned bums glaring straight ahead and delivering deadpan repetitions of "Fun, laughs, good times", as well as a languidly spelling out the set-up's basic erotic economics: "Spend two best years for jumping airplanes) a little time with me (diamonds/diamonds)." Again, Wow, but a different kind of Wow, longer and lower, much lower.

Yet this dumb first-moude of such a ritual crudes its own stifling enchantment and appeal. The strongly exaggerated stances, the coyest an angular rather than rounded movement, the teasing camerawork and brazen use of constant, cutting-in editing counterbalance towards a convincing overall effect that reactivates student cheap into stylish chic.

As with the two other musicals photographed and directed by Fosse, *Cabaret* (1972) and *All That Jazz* (1979), this scene adds to the fine reuniting and stay put-on of Artisans, this key-hole view of steady, steady, carnal reality, this dancing in-the Fosse dark, nevertheless possesses a showy metallic glint, a gaudy diamond-hard flash. In short, glamorous. In deconstructing the banalities of Fred's glamour, Fosse reconstructs his own brand of glamour aptly conveyed by the promotional slogan for *Cabaret* as "a divinely decadent experience".

We did not only glimpse of Fosse-Dark Glamour in some of those 1950s MGM musicals which showcased Fosse's work both as a regular-choreographer, head-holding young dancer and as a reconfigural, idiosyncratic, pioneering choreographer.

In the "From This Moment On" number from *Kiss Me Kate* (1955), after the first two couples have done their bright bits, Fosse gives himself and Broadway colleague Carol Haney an absolutely scolding duet, introduced by a skidding screen and further punctuated by curled up knee bends, unexpected body slaps and a sort of danced, head-holding stage. Conceptually and cynically it's a far cry from Anna Miller's sunny exhibition top, Howard Knoff's robust leer and Kathryn Grayson's operatic trill in the same film.

Similarly the boozey trade union choreography of John Rait and Dora Day in *The Pagan Gene* (1957) are counterpointed by Fosse's dance director of the twenty, underplayed tangos in "Hersie's Halloway" (sic) and the prototypical Fossian "amacha" grouping of compressed human patterns in "Steam Heat". And bursting forth from the Pausanias baseball fairs of *Game Time* (1958) is Gwen Verdon's knockout instance of screen immaturity when then-husband Fosse choreographs her unadorned, high-boned legness through "Whatever Lola Wants, Lola Gets".



SWEET CHARITY Paula Kelly, Shirley MacLaine, Christopher Reeve

But the most honoured (right Occurs including her director) and best remembered Fosse film is possibly *Cabaret*. This musical revamping of Christopher Isherwood's Berlin scenes by way of John Van Druten's *P.A. A Camera* boldly reflects the social norms of Weimar Germany within the busy confines of the Kit Kat Klub, a Berlin nightclub where can can girls turn into strutting Nazi soldiers and a past female gender acts as a metaphor for persecuted Jewry.

Among *Cabaret*'s superb costumes, Joel Grey's devil doll M.C., and Lisa Minnelli's "unemotional singing machine" Sally Bowles singing and dancing "The Money Song" are a cynical high point. The number also furnishes a revealing indicator of aspects of Artisan and Fosse Glamour when placed alongside Fred and Judy Garland's renowned team effort "A Couple of Swells" from *Rosie Posade* (1948).

Both numbers are novelty songs about wealth and the relative conditions of having and having not.

In the Irving Berlin standard, Judy and Fred play at being a pair of New York city bums who clubhouse upon the neurotic joys of slumming ("We could sail up the river/But we haven't got a yacht/We could ride up the river/But the horse we had was shot"). For the Elton and Kander composition, specially devised for *Cabaret* the film, Lisa and Joel play at being a couple of over-the-hill folks who perform a piece to how it's cold and nothing else, certainly not love ("But when hunger comes a tap-tap-tap, tap-tap at the window/ See how love flies out the door!") that makes the world go round.

Fosse uses Minnelli's top heavy eagerness to please and Grey's mischievous sultry pretenses to fuel the song's message that come true all, to the extent that "a mark, a yea, a buck or a pound" offer some kind of sex surrogate, her bosom and his stomach become



• wondrous banks of trickling gold as the squagled vamp and motetted dwarf shower themselves in riches, turning each other on to the last for love

Of course the lyrics do tender some momentary rub (Brechtian moral compensation ("That clinking, clinking, clinking sound/is all that makes the world go round"). However a lot of our collective reader from the sang remains anchored in shots of the skidding Minarch schematics and the juggling Grey grots

This doesn't necessarily mean we get out our ideological whips and mangle Fosse to some theoretical concentration camp for Suspended Sexual Objectivity or Coerced Body Image. It simply appears that this is how Fosse's onscreen choreographic and dramaturgical skills have chosen to employ the particular talents of particular individuals to interpret a particular song. Or that is to say parts (including body parts) of Minarch and Grey serve an overall theme in "The Money Song". Their considerably energies are recruited and managed by Fosse to make performative means reach an informative end.

It's the showing as much as the show that for Fosse must go on . . .

What choreographer Robert Altom, Fred Astaire and Judy Garland achieve in the "Swirls" routine comes across as significantly different. To begin with, the whole affair is filmed using what had become recognized as Astaire's trademark, namely the performing figures in top-to-toe medium long shot producing a unity, which is further reinforced by the impression (and often the actual occurrence) of seamless flow, of being staged in one continuous take.

There's a notable absence here of Fosse's viscous inter- and intra-cutting technique, where the frame cuts up into an ever-changing frame of other shots, either related or unrelated to the main dance action, allowing for the effects of fragmentation. In its place, what we see is what we get: Fred and Judy going through a waltzlike turn against a conventional painted backdrop.

Most of any variety involved is up to them to perform for us without lightning edits or multiple camera angles. Aside from the song's quite arbitrary theme that you can be happy being poor by pretending you're not, the number's unmitigated show-off-it-goes-wholesome of execution permits the undeniable pleasure of witnessing two great stars rock it to us.

In torn rags and faded patches they may abuse and ramp it up, displaying the full riches that the glamour of their talent together affords. This isn't "let's" of Astaire and Garland pragmatically picking out a map of a larger thematic mosaic, grand scheme or Big Idea.

This is the kinder lovely thing that happens when he passes erect in harried top hat and daisy polka dot bow tie and she ducks down and around, probing variation with low down shimmers and humors, winking toothless smiles. It's the real thing and not necessarily the "realist" thing that Fosse claims he was trying to reject upon the cinematic genre, where he has, in his own words, "generally tried to make the mythical more believable" .

And watch how Fred watches Judy, how generously he "gives" the scene to her. Not standing back, mind you, but perceiving, responding, using the carriage and bearing of their bodies within the number to stress, inflect, change, in fact, *ask*, the routine. If Fosse evidently such is the flinty cross-cutting glories of montage, then the Astaire mode achieves self-propelling rate on some to express the special pleasure of his musical whirl.

The transition to film history from Astaire to Fosse glamour can be seen to reflect a parallel shift in art history which moves from classical Renaissance perspective (man as the measure of all things) to disorienting, distorting expressionism, abstraction and surrealism (man as an in-measurable part of many, many things). Fred Astaire, as has been often noted, functions as a kind of swirling, animated version of Leonardo da Vinci's perfectly



EASTERN PARADE: Astaire (red) Judy Garland

dimensioned ideal man, the figure placed within a geometrically divided circle which is itself framed by a square, or if we so choose, a cinema screen, Bob Fosse's choreographic curves cover an ambitious palette spanning the darkened eyes, pallid countenances and violent emotionalism associated with, say, Edvard Munch, to the tented hips, poking buttocks, splayed fingers and generally dismembered stardom paraded in the spatio-dramas of Salvador Dalí. The Astaire mode is a definite style (a way of aesthetically meeting and matching the world, as if). The Fosse strands trace out a certain stylisation (a way of turning around and making a different world, which may or may not be).

This question of scale and proportion might suggest how Astaire glamour shifts so casually across to dimensions of unquestionable radiance while Fosse glamour seems "merely" floated at the level of ratty camp.

Speaking scientifically/poetically, forces are said to radiate and disperse energies in equal distribution when the dynamic source is centrifugal, when rays emit from a central core. In other words, Astaire glamour could appear to radiate, to be a radiance of glamour due to the phenomenon of an ever-present, governing principle which sustains rate and guides the differentials of frequency and speed. And that quintessential dynamic principle itself, of course, is Fred Astaire — he is the music that makes him (and others) dance. Within this contextual sphere, Fosse functions as a high-flying genre of fissions or jetsam, a mass of startling details that don't quite make a whole.

Why else do Fred and Ginger in the "Boyz-n-the-Biz" rehearsal tap from *The Barkleys Of Broadway* (1949) project a luminescence and awe that the "Do Broadway" audition sequence in Fosse's *All That Jazz* can only meet with the perpetuation of anxious hopheads straining to match the demands of A. Chorus Line-Up? (Do do they and the segment just get wasted from the exhausting diversion and pressure of Alex Hein's editing tou-de-loups?)

Why do we remember, can never forget, the boy-to-boy bonding of "The Cuckoo" from *Flying Down To Rio* (1933) and the crossing arms of armchairs alone in "The Psychology" from *Top Hat* (1935) when the ephemeral spirit of the Pompeii Club's "Ruth Men's Frig" in *Sweet Charity* (1969) has long since dimmed?

How come the utter simplicity of "By Myself" in *The Band Wagon* (1953) seems to say (and do) so much more (and so much less) about solitude, ego and mortality than the whole phenomenological Kantian fireworks finale of "Bye Bye Life" in *All That Jazz*?

In looking at Fosse versus Astaire glamour we find a real link between glamour that goes and glamour that grows? Do Fosse and Astaire respectively affirm and negate the 19th century Romantic novelist Duhaud's dictum: "I know how quickly the glamour fades in the test of constant intercourse?"¹



KISS ME KATE: Bob Fosse far left with Tommy Fleet, Bobby Lane, Ann Miller

Given his superlative natural radiance, can fabulous Fred ever really dim? And was bright Bob, even alone, in perpetual peril of overshadowing himself, of being Fosse lived in his own mesmerizing, frightening modernity?

Perhaps the formidable dance (and former film) critic Arlene Croce (author of the acclaimed *Fred Astaire And Ginger Rogers Book*) might assist with a few observations to help clear up at least some of the enigmas surrounding Astaire, Fosse and Hollywood Glamour:

On Fosse

[His] method of closing down and hugging the figure so that the only way it can move is by rotating and precariously balancing unbalanced parts makes it a good vehicle for dramatic display and slithering stupor.²

On Astaire

Passion — the missing element in just about every "bunny" diet that has been attempted since — is usually confined with emotion and erotic gestures. With Astaire and Rogers it's a matter of total professional detachment; they do not give us emotions, they give us desire and the more beautifully they dance, the more powerful the spell that seems to bind them together.³

When the curtain went up on an Astaire dance ... the experience was as dazzling the only such response was gratified to find film having brought it into existence.⁴

- 1 Arlene Croce, *The Fred Astaire And Ginger Rogers Book* (Vintage Books, New York, 1975) p.14
- 2 Ruth Scurrin (ed), *Memo From David O. Reardon: Astaire Book* (New York, 1975) pp.13-5
- 3 *Inside Heat: Discover The Astaire-Astaire-Lite Book* (Simon/Scribner, 1975) p.25
- 4 David Thomson, *A Biographical Dictionary of the Cinema*, Bantam & Woburn London (1980) p.10
- 5 *Ibid* p.124
- 6 Interview with Glenn Loney in *After Dark* magazine quoted by Greg Fisher, *The International Dictionary of Film And Film-makers*, Vol. 4, Macmillan Chicago 1984, p.150
- 7 Duhaud, *Hein In Bonaparte* 1960, p.11
- 8 Arlene Croce, *Astairemania: Astair & Fosse* (New York, 1979) p.133
- 9 *Ibid* p.135
- 10 *Ibid* p.135

For Terry O'Quinn

1975's *Hearts In Palm* by Collins, Anna and Peter O'Quinn, Jill Wigman, Lorraine Mortimer, Bill Russell, Kay Thompson and Michael White.

THE M IRONI

BANK



"The great show is at last, and is based by loneliness, as every viewer's pleasure must be" — David Thomson

I think there are two kinds of complexity (film buff), or perhaps two conflicting tendencies within every true, serious buff. On the one hand, a deep attraction to states of solitude; and on the other, a celebration of community. The movies allow, and encourage both tendencies. I can go home and have sad dreams about *Once Upon A Time In America* as if the film had been made only for me, and I can also whoop it up with the great hounds at a marathon of *Five Dead II*. I have a suspicion that as critics become more dedicated and "professional" — as they identify themselves from the Hayek theorem complex and end up dividing their time between secluded preview rooms, the VCR and their writing desk — inevitably memorably so, and the whole experience of film becomes intensely "pretended".

Of all the great writers on film, David Thomson seems to me also the most melancholy. He caters to his sense of solitude, and passes it reflexively through each film, until he star that comes into his view. Whether writing about telephones or mountains, Cary Grant or Warren Beatty, *Wishy* or *Miss's Murder*, Thomson sees in each the signs of a sad shadow play: lack of fulfillment, loss, separation, desperation. No matter what fleeting joy or whettery flickers across the screen, for Thomson it is all ghosted by a recognition of its unrelatable, solitary and. Although one could fairly object that Thomson ends up "rigging" most of his subjects in order to produce such a reading (and what film criticism doesn't ultimately do just that?), there's no doubt that he is the most eloquent spokesperson for the melancholic aspect of the filmgoing experience.

Prospective readers of *Warren Beatty: A Life And A Story* should be forewarned of that which Thomson lays on the table in the first few pages of the book: this is a "biography" by someone who has never met, spoken to or corresponded with his subject. Thomson's trick, in fact, is to write about Beatty as if he is already dead. This corresponds to the book's ideas about stardom and glamour affix the screen actor as ghost, myth, blank screen upon which the viewer projects his or her own tortured desire. We cannot ever know the "real" Beatty; he exists only as a fiction of the imagination. This lengthy exploration by

MAN IN THE C MASK

Thomson of the key tenets of what could justly be termed his theory of popular film — a theory of desire and imagination — will delight readers in tune with this not-so-hidden agenda; but it may well disappoint readers in search of a more conventional, and conventionally informative, biography.

There are in fact two books in one — the 'life' and a 'story', a novel which runs its alternate chapters with the biography. Thomson offers his story as a reflective commentary on Beatty's life, "a part fit for him to play" (qtd). It concerns a naive outsider to the movie world, a writer named D, being brought into the mysterious, duplicitous kingdom of a reclusive superstar, Eves. This literary gambit (or ruse?) does not work as well as it should for Thomson, and it weighs the book down mightily. The 'story' is somewhat monotonous and lifeless — coming to a straight after reading Rudolph Wurlitzer's rare dissimilar novel about New Hollywood, *Slow Fade*. I found myself wondering whether it is a rule of the genre for the innocent narrator to have his neck snapped by the producer/star's secretary by page 25. In the context of the parallel parts, this story feels particularly ineffectual as, while trying to expand and delve more deeply into the themes thrown up by Beatty's stardom (particularly the sinister Howard Hughes-style secrecy), it ends up merely "illustrating" and retreating from, over and over.

Another reason the 'story' doesn't work is that, finally, I don't think Thomson is too good at stories. He underwatches them and their magic — he even provides his own version of Fitzgerald's famous "I'm just making pictures" lesson from *The Last Tycoon* — but his deepest sensibility lies elsewhere. For Thomson, reading good films are only important for the moments of reflection they create, the pauses, the echoes. Movies always provide a real revelation for him, he cherishes the dark, frozen moments of silent watching, waiting and listening. The cinema — and particularly the cinema based on a system of glamorous stars — is a spectacle of *intensity*, of private thoughts and knowing, luminous faces (here Thomson meets the very different thought Jean-Louis Schefer, for whom films reveal "the unknown centre of ourselves"). The subject of the book is Beatty (rather than Jack Nicholson or Al Pacino) because he is an actor who "prefers to be involved by the perplexity of a moment", who assumes doubt and speculation whilst performing/being,

rather than one who 'projects'. Thomson is fond of the notion of 'worrying' — and Beatty is someone who 'worries at' his role, rendering them strangely opaque and ghostlike.

It has to be said that, because of Thomson's affinity for the 'projector', from moment to the most successful commentary he provides to the 'life' is not the 'story' but the remarkably selected, and often tantalisingly mysterious still photographs — everything from Beatty's face at its most inscrutable to haunted highway vistas. The book seems equally alive when both the 'biography' — and the numerous reflections on what it is to write biography — give way to what Thomson does best and what few biographers can do at all: the analysis of films. In a few brief pages, Thomson brings *Lulu*, *The Parallax View*, *Melody* (her and McCabe And Mr Miller alive in ways and from angles that no one has ever told or imagined before). Thomson can grasp in a truly exciting way the interplay of an actor's construction, the part he or she has been called upon to play, the persona that has accrued to the star, and the total semantic field of the film as a film — where all this holds together and where it flies apart.

When it comes to the question of glamour in the cinema, I think there are two traditions. The first would be exemplified for me by the chapter in Robert Benayoun's book on Buster Keaton called *The Mask Of Cinema*, a lover of love truly without limits. For Benayoun, Keaton's face is a mask, a perfect work of flesh, an impenetrable image. Age cannot enter him, nor customs stain his infinite variety.

— In Alfred Appoll's *Signs Of Life*, a rather darker variation on the theme of the mask works itself out: the mask as hands, as the person of Damon Gray, the real desire and the real complexity lying beneath the surface. Thomson falls somewhere between the two traditions, playing them against each other. His 'story' gives full vent to the grain cinema, the fatal contradictions of the condition of stardom. But his interest in the 'life' is the emotion of someone fully seduced, who sees in the face of the actor, and the film it engages, "the ultimate transcending of history". For Thomson, transcendence lies undoubtedly here, in the real, in pure melancholy. But for me, for you? We are not through yet with the cultural complexities of desire and imagination.

Adrian Martin

Warren Beatty: A Life And A Story by David Thomson (Corgi & Woburn/Amidon Publishing Company, 1992, ISBN 0 436 6800 2, hbk, \$29.95 mp)

SHORTS C I

PETER CRAVEN
ruffles some Feathers
and **JOHN CONOMOS**
gets deep about
Ocean, Ocean.

A few years ago the American film story writer Raymond Carver briefly visited the country and his legacy, which is admired by such Australian writers as Helen Garner and Elizabeth Jolley, has crept quite a ways in Australian taste that time. Carver is a meticulous craftsman who celebrates succinctly and with compassion the lives of lower middle America and not just in any narrow economic sense. Carver's America is an America without glamour and without prestige: a world of little people getting by as best they can. The authority of his writing comes from the disparity with which he treats classless life in its plainness. His style is crystalline: it traces the ups and downs of the tough life with a delicacy of understated cadence. I suspect he appeals to Australians so much because of his understatement, his ability to touch on the experience of the nearly invisible and his complete lack of social pretensions.

It makes sense that someone played have had the idea of turning Carver's story *Feathers* into a short Australian movie. The world of Carver's fiction has a real resemblance to that of our rarely seen suburban world as it was represented in Stephen Wallace's *Love Letters* from *Picnic Hotel* and it's not hard to imagine the early Stephen Wallace, or perhaps the later Christopher Craven, from producing small masterpieces which included Carver into the language Australian cinema needs so much: an idiom which would be explicit and staged, without without the circumstantial dress of realism.

Unfortunately the director's happen with *Feathers* as John Ruane directs it. Carver's story is about a man and woman who meet a couple in the country and end up changing their lives. The story represents Carver at his most laconic and its punch comes from its last page and the retrospective light it casts. There's a fat lady baby and a pet parrot and a fair amount of dancing domestic bliss but everything in the story is laconically euphoric, a never strains towards symbolism. And the



FEATHERS: Not kidding at all

stylistic consistency ensures that the surprising conclusion fits its own inevitability.

John Ruane's Australianised version both adapts the story to assigned Australian conditions (which is fine) and invades the wisdom of Carver's action and dialogue with a Victorian-like staidness — and somewhere this makes. Part of the trouble is that Carver's homoerotic poor white world (which is devoid of any sense of class) suffers an odd sea change through a needless bout of Australian self-consciousness and social unease. In the story the contrast is between the domestic, courted couple with child and pet and their free-spirited folk. In the film this somehow gets entangled with something suspiciously like the *Life Style* issue. The subplot is that Jack (James Laune) and Fran (Rebecca Gillies) look as though they have escaped from the nearest advertising agency to visit their lack friends (not their families) and Cilla (Julie Forsyth) — whereas much of the point of the screen comes from the fact that the two couples from occupied two corners of precisely the same world. The subtle gap in the story between the bewilderment and the children couple gets dressed out in the least subtle kind of social distinction and all

the signals seem wrong. What is the short story is told in the first person in a tone of sustained naivete which even the reader over to a point from which two perspectives take the film inevitably makes the audience identify with the embarrassment of the city slickers.

Feathers is certainly a film with its heart in the right place. The opening scenes with the city couple, concentrating the visual attractions between them, are rigorous and enticing. And the visual play of keeping the couples at the time frame initially and then advocating and realising a moment and night well have been very satisfying but the script and the acting, too, brings down.

Rebecca Gillies, in Fran, does have the advantage of looking like a big ball of water, which is how Fran is described in the story but she plays the part in the muted Australian plain style that one associates with the daily soap — she mimics the day's an attractive, eye-catching woman equal to anything and with no more depth than she needs. Both James Laune as Jack and Neil Melville as their boy on the side (a bit of a stiff but still has as though they had to characterise the vulgarity of their characters rather than simply be ordinary blokes). Either of these could benefit from

watching Jack Thompson on a good day. In the part of the wife in the country, Julie Forsyth seems to me quite simply wrong. She plays the role in that Cornishman's role which she has used on Melbourne stage audiences to something from Lady Macbeth to Madame Tsvetkovskaya. Oddly enough it doesn't work in *Feathers*: clearly acting even though she is playing a country woman the effect is both wooden and unconvincing.

Feathers has the advantage of its simplicity. The countryside around Ballarat is used to splendid effect in all its rocky blues and burnt gold. A smattering of moments work with a real freshness and poise and the all important parrot is quite a performer. But when it all comes down to it *Feathers* is a very interesting piece of film which does not quite come alive.

It was shown with Megan Simpson's *An Australian Summer*, a short film with less muted pretensions. A piece of journeybook by a director recently out of film school, this was little more than a montage with images it showed, however, almost inadvertently, because the attempt to fictionalise was so obvious, some kind of extraction of the low key Australia that *Feathers* needed to come to terms with.

R C U I T

Occasionally we encounter a new film which nullifies the saying: better than it is still possible to create a cinema of fresh images and sounds that opened to the heart — a cinema of passion and instantly shedding light on the human condition. The film I'm referring to is *Kerosin* (renamed *Clown*, *Cloran* — an Australian-French Merin co-production — whose importance for our local film-making scene will, I believe, increase with the passage of time. *Cloran* (Doris) is a highly accomplished work of ambiguity and silence that exhibits a rare filmic sensibility at home with the main narrative and stylistic conventions of the European art film as a distinct mode of cinematic discovery.

Cloran (Doris)'s national exposure centres on an important ability to manipulate the visual language of the art cinema so that in effect we have a work that approximates Breton's definition of his own (subtle) cinema as 'cinématographie'. That is to say, a cinema which rejects the basic tenet of most of our mainstream cinema which is according to the French filmmaker no more than photographed theatre. *Cloran*, *Cloran* is a splendid instance of his description of cinematography as... a writing with images in movement and with sound.

There may be some who will see *Cloran* (Doris) as simply a faithful reproduction of the key formal and thematic configurations of the art cinema. And there may be others who may object to its ideologically skewed story of a young woman having a relationship with an elderly man. Both positions, I

contend, are misleading in the light of the evidence on the screen.

Cloran, *Cloran* is a brave and imaginative work whose subtle colour palette is an essential world where its local characters work understanding in a universe of indifference. This is not to say that the film is without humour. On the contrary, within the only sequence staged around a serious lake where we see the heroine pursued by an amorous young man who is limping because his shoes are too small I say 'brave' because the film is genuinely experimental in concept and execution. It is a work that dares to take risks, the biggest risk being the writer-director's willingness to create a work of great refinement, that belongs and contributes to an unmistakably original cinematic topography, manifested by Renata Doris and Reuben.

Intense given to haunting scenes of characters and their ambiguous relationships in a world that is at the same time alluring and imperceptibly mysterious. She looks out new revealing optics in the relation of image to sound. But viewed in this case, including Felicity Foster's opposite, meaningful music is silence, a silence which speaks of our solitude and given in a world of fleeting happenings. The film's characters seem to be happen encounters in the warmth of their dwellings. The world outside is both beautiful and sad, a place only fit for passing through as we are reminded in one of the work's pivotal scenes, where the heroine visits her father home at his office.

Cloran, *Cloran* possesses several fine and understated performances. Helen Mawson is especially credible in the personae of Renata. Peter Mul in his aged companion is equally sensitive in his role and his finely sculptured face is, on several occasions, embraced by a slow moving camera. This is a tender work of love, gentleness and doubt. *Renata* (Doris) is the loveliest of other companions, in particular memorable. His respective face reflects a quiet wisdom of someone in peace with the world.

Cloran, *Cloran* is a mature work of abundant conceptual and technical accomplishment. It knows what it wants to say and how best to say it. It is a film of beauty and sadness, of silence and compassion. *Renata* (Doris) is a work for it.



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AUSTRALIAN SUMMERS: Anne Tenney and John Lowitt

**What can Australia
learn from Britain's
Channel 4? Plenty,
argues HUW EVANS.**

THE SIGN OF

Most people in the film and television industry will be familiar with the origins of Channel 4 in the UK and with the various shenanigans over the last decade to achieve something similar in Australia.

In fact genesis of the concept occurred in the two countries at very much the same time. In the case of Channel 4 it was the Annan Committee on Future of Broadcasting between 1974 and 1977 which laid out the general philosophy and structure of the Fourth Channel largely on the basis suggested by the Committee by broadcaster and writer Anthony Smith.

Smith argued that the new channel should be

placed outside the existing competitive strategy, outside the BBC/ABC duopoly ... wedged in a different domain from existing broadcasting authorities, to a degree of openness rather than to balance to competition rather than to neutralisation.

Considerable argument and considerable riverblossom had to be squelched through in the few years between Annan's report and the start of transmission by Channel 4 late in 1982.

I don't think I need to detail Channel 4's subsequent performance other than to point out that in the last British financial year to March 1987, Channel 4 not only met its audience targets with a range of programs and films which have received international critical acclaim, but also failed close to £180 million worth of advertising and returned a profit of around £20 million to the mainstream commercial operators who fund it.

Almost everyone had, of course, declared in 1980 that the concept couldn't and wouldn't work. So well is it working now that the discussion turned on ousting it from or even privatising it.

In the same year in which Annan returned his findings (1977), the Australian Labor Party adopted, as part of its policy on arts and communications, a plan to establish what one of its creators, Philip Jackson, had dubbed "The Electric Gallery". This was to be a television service which concerned itself with programs which were educational and fostered a national cultural identity. It would support the Australian film and

television industry and, like Channel 4, would act in the market only as a publisher of programs — that is, it would make none of its own.

Labor, however, was not then in office and the concept was overtaken by the Fraser Government's decision to broaden the scope of multilingual programming then being undertaken on radio stations 2EA Sydney and 2EA Melbourne by creating a multilingual television service, now SBS TV, which began regular transmission on October 24, 1980.

We should in no way seek to minimise or dismiss the political and social exigencies which prompted the establishment of SBS.

The point is, of course, that the Channel 4 option with which I and the ABC have both associated turns on the administrative of the channel, structure and resources of SBS TV, with greatly increased program supply from the independent production sector and non-"in-house" sources.

I think it is important to be aware of the quite desultory treatment SBS has had to

put up with at the hands of successive Governments

Here is a brief chronicle

- 1975 Radio stations ABC and SBS begin experimental transmissions.
- 1978 ABC requested to provide a permanent ethnic broadcasting service
- 1977 Request to ABC at home by a Fraser Government disappointed by the ABC's established reputation and the SBS established
- 1980 Government proposes "Independent and Multicultural Broadcasting Corporation (IMBC)" Senate rejects legislation to establish Commission on Education and the Arts which recommends against proceeding. SBS TV proceeds under the supplementary provisions of the Broadcasting and Television Act
- 1981 Government abandons IMBC legislation
- 1982 Carter Committee of Review of the SBS established
- 1984 Carter report released
- 1986 Government announces establishment (March) of Special Broadcasting Corporation as an independent statutory authority to replace the SBS as recommended by Carter and the SBS itself in its subsequent critique of the inquiry
- 1988 Corporate proposal submitted. Mergers of ABC and SBS announced to combine asset savings, will date very seriously in the budget deficit.
- 1987 Legislation to merge ABC and SBS defeated in the Senate. Issue referred again to the Standing Committee on Education and the Arts.
- 1987 Just prior to the July election Government abandons merger. Senate Standing Committee not to be outcome, recommends amalgamation should proceed
- 1987 Child after the election New Minister Graham Evans encourages Government to re-examine options, including "appropriately adapted Channel 4 structure, amalgamation with ABC or as yet unestablished alternative.

It may be useful at this point, to refer briefly to the record of the first inquiry by the Senate Committee on Education and the Arts when it considered (and recommended against) the legislation to create the new TV service and later the SBS into the Independent Multicultural Broadcasting Corporation, as proposed by the Fraser Government and the then Minister, Tony Staley.

The report was presented to the Senate more than twelve years ago in August 1982 shortly before SBS TV began.

At page 18

The SBS in its infancy expressed great confidence in the IMBC's ability to provide a highly professional service that matches at every expression that of the commercial broadcasters of the ABC

At page 28 the Commission says

... as we announced that the movement towards its permanent introduction [to the IMBC] is being made without the necessary preliminary preparation that would ensure its success. [. . .]

The evidence has not shown that the proposed programming policies will necessarily be successful in achieving a worthwhile intercultural exchange between those people of the various ethnic communities and with Australian society at large.

Multiculturalism as envisaged by the IMBC would seem to depend upon the equality of foreign language programs with English broadcasting — a policy that on the basis of evidence received is open to question and hence a policy which will need considerable experimentation.

That experimentation is still going on. The fact is, however, that since the inception of ethnic and multicultural broadcasting in Australia, a defined long term role, organisational structure and funding mechanism for the SBS have proved elusive to successive Governments and Ministers. To this it is plain enough the program focus is somewhat too narrow: the IMF transmits its system elsewhere further from its potential audiences, and not nearly enough money is being spent on Australian-made product.

So if it encouraging that the new Minister should now be prepared to look to the UK Channel 4 television model for possible solutions to some of the SBS's problems. One cannot argue with his expressed view that things simply cannot be allowed to continue as they are.

Most recent surveys suggest that as a new ratings basis, SBS TV is achieving an average share of little more than 1 per cent of the viewing audience. Taken together the metropolitan commercial network generally achieves close to 90 per cent.

Thus the effectiveness of using "multi-cultural" television as presently provided by SBS TV to achieve a significant degree of "intercultural exchange" has to be seriously questioned. Put simply, as well as, so intercultural exchange.

I realise that some of these judgements may seem slender as the basis of the high degree of government and community involvement by SBS TV since its inception. Within its budgetary and technical limitations, SBS TV has shown itself willing to be experimental and innovative. It has attracted considerable interest abroad. Its advertising still enjoys a high international reputation and has successfully produced much important non-English film and television product accessible to Australian and other English speaking audiences.

Yet it is the very dependence for reasons of cost upon overseas sources for so many of its programs which has exposed SBS TV's multicultural function to be perceived by much of the wider community as essentially foreign, foreign and unrelated to even a plausible view of the Australian cultural identity. The danger in allowing such a perception to become entrenched is that the policy of multiculturalism will itself be marginalised, ghettoised and ultimately subverted.

The due to broadening the "multi-cultural" program philosophy lies in the approach to the wider question of cultural identity. A paper by Dr Peter Sheldrake, formerly Director of the Australian Institute of Multicultural Affairs (now the Office of Multicultural Affairs) contains the following observation:

... it is my view that multiculturalism is often spoken about as if it dealt only with ethnic, racial and linguistic. Academic examination of culture suggests that identity and the cultural lens is far less, comes from a person's simultaneous membership of several overlapping but different groups.

Each person in our society belongs to groups characterised on the basis of



FILMS THAT BEAR THE SIGN OF A
Comedian [top] My Beautiful Launderer
[middle] Mophead [bottom]

ethnic, gender, class, occupation, generation etc. An approach to multiculturalism which ignores these groups, and thus contribution to society will be both inadequate and ineffective.

I would want to add a further dimension to the charter of a broadcaster committed to such a view of "cultural identity" and that is the dimension of awareness. For it seems to me pointless to create such a television service unless it undertakes a dynamic cultural and social role. Blind passivity in the face of racism, sexism, racial injustice, power claims, intellectual reductionism and homogeneity for homogeneity's sake is not enough of an agenda.

After all, the Australian contemporary culture in all its diversity is emerging at precisely the same time as technology and commerce propel us towards globalism. Unless we provide ourselves with structures within which to achieve a confident expression of our culture at the international level, our contributions to global culture are more likely to be technoprofessional and conforming.

Although the work I undertook for the ABC developed a national budget, program expenditure profile and some cost-equivalent advertising estimates for an SBS/Channel 4 hybrid, much will depend upon the parameters identified by the Department of Communications working party established in July by the minister.

4) to develop policy options in this area. There will need to be more discussion, consultation and structural development before a concept of this kind can be translated into reality.

A number of threshold questions will have to be addressed.

Firstly, what should we mean when we talk of multiculturalism in television? How do we deal, in that context, with such program objectives as innovation, experimentation, sophistication, style, editorial independence, the targeting of general or specialist-interest audiences as well as general and specific-interest advertisers?

Secondly, should we approach the question of multilingual television separately? Are there desirable quotas we should seek to meet and, if so, how should they be accommodated within either the BBC or the wider television system?

Thirdly, in what ways will the creation of this service impact upon our other television services and can we now take other special steps to ensure that other desirable broadcasting policy objectives are achieved?

(For example, can we, in the overall management of our television services accommodate a measure of public or community access television? Should we try to counter the centralisation of production in Sydney? Is there a case for the special provision of educational television material? Should not the charter of the ABC be made more role-specific and its structure refined accordingly? Should there be more or less regulation of commercial programming and station ownership?)

Fourthly, what other future options do stand consequent upon technological advance or other factors. If Free TV is just around the corner, for example, what sort of life expectancy would a channel of the kind we have been discussing actually have?

I realise that there is a danger here of posing so many questions (and there are a great many more) that one loses sight of the original objective. The reality is, of course, that in the matter of television policy, the two other Australian Governments have shown themselves to be miserably inept. In television and politics, everything is now perceived to be connected to everything else.

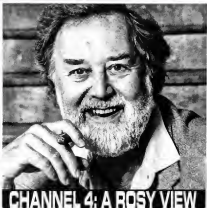
This proposal will generate both assent and resistance. It will require goodwill, patience, candour, an enthusiasm for cultural and creative diversity and a sense of realism to negotiate its many merits and resolve its difficulties. But ultimately I have to say I think it is the best option of the three.

It is best because it will provide us with a qualitative diversity of television program choice at what is overwhelmingly a homogeneous, mainstream market.

It is best because it will harness and use efficiently resources which at present are underutilised and bring the production of non-mainstream programs into a more market-related environment.

But most importantly it is best because it could give us an opportunity to embark on the confident celebration in television of Australia's contemporary cultural identity in more than just its popular dimension. And that will change us all for the better.

*This paper was given at the second annual SPAA conference held at Salford University in December last year.



David Rose puts writers first. As commissioning editor at Channel 4, he has been responsible for more than 100 films, from *The Draughtsmen's Contract* to *Weathering* and *Playing Away*, which have helped revitalise the UK film industry.

He became a founder member of Channel 4 after 25 years at the BBC, as drama editor at Birmingham and before that as producer of drama series, including *2 Cars*.

In this interview with HUNTER GORDAY, he talks about the impact of Channel 4, script funding, and a trusting partnership between finance and independent filmmakers.

The same Channel 4, and Film Four International living with them a stamp of quality on the screen and also a sense that English film production is now divided into two assessment periods... before and after Channel 4.

Yes. I'm aware of this and it's enormously heartening the way Channel 4 has invigorated the British cinema. It certainly was at a low ebb, employment was very low in 1980-81 when we started and then seemed so quickly it became hard to get the commission or editor you wanted. We were filling a gap of course and it wasn't just a question of jobs, there was a huge gulf between the film industry and television, and we've closed that gap.

Now I think it's a real partnership, particularly in the way the talent flows across the two industries — writers and directors are making films and not thinking too much if it's for cinema or television; they're making films and certainly 95 per cent of the time we're making now have theatrical potential.

As you've said, Channel 4 has

directly altered the relationship between television and cinema. Films are now automatically linked to television, from the beginning, whereas in the past that connection came much later... Channel 4 has changed the sequence hasn't it?

In quality and content they're absolutely linked. There's hardly a film being made in Britain today that has not got television money upfront, wanting it to be made. Television money has held together an enormous number of films that otherwise would not have been made.

And this has changed the 'look' of television in the process?

Yes, it has. The *Play For Today* and the *Video Play* are having a huge struggle to survive on television. I'm supporting six one-hour video plays and we'll be screening them shortly. I'm particularly happy about the *Barbus* each one is from a writer new to television. Perhaps one or two of them will go on and write screenplays and give something to cinema later. There are still some television plays, but the

opportunities for film are so much greater and the audience perceives a film as something a great deal richer than television studio drama.

Channel 4 produces very distinctive films... is there a 'Channel 4' filter, do you have a signature?

I think it's very difficult to say. Firstly, our budgets are on the low side — when we first went to air our first was 20 feature films a year. It's dropped to 18 this year simply because the production costs have completely outstripped the budget.

In Year One I had 60 million to support 20 features. That gave me an average of £300-600. Today the average cost is £1.2 million and my budget is £2½ million. The reasons for the early low costs were that we were new, we went engaging independent producers for the first time, and it was a foreigner's period. We are trying to support low budget films — that's what I mean cheap films — and we look very closely at the budgets so we know it's practical and the money is on the screen, not in high locations.

What, for you, is an independent filmmaker?

An independent is a production company, a producer, linked possibly with a director who has his or her own company and is entirely independent of the commercial companies and the BBC. You might call the writers and directors freelance, but they are independent. When we came into the field we were very anxious that the independent sector would grow and thrive because before 1980 independents had hardly any opportunity for their work to be seen on BBC or ITV.

Why was that?

I worked for the BBC. It made economic sense: you have staff, staff agreements and you believe that by dispersing your staff on all the programs in the land (possibly) you are making economic sense. Of course you have a much greater degree of editorial control over the program makers if you have them in-house.

We set out from the beginning at Channel 4 to commission independentists while keeping an arm's length. I know Jeremy Isaacs has always been very keen that we should commission people with very clear understanding as to what they were going to make for us, then they'd go away and do it. In my experience a fast topic works like that.

How does editorial control work at Channel 4?

In feature films we will only move when we're satisfied with the script, that it is within the last four or five being satisfactory. We have 2000 scripts to choose from each year, in one form or another, and when you're selecting 18 from 2000 you simply go with the project you can see most clearly and you believe in, the one that excites you.

In contractual terms we have script approval, approval of the director (we come and spend a week), we have access to the script, access to the rushes, access to the rough cut, and we have final approval. In more than 100 films we've never actually had any arguments about the line out approval because we have respect for the people who make our films.

We will argue and persuade as hard as we like but finally it's the work of the filmmaker and that must be respected.

Corcoran is an interesting example. It was one of the last scripts on my desk in 1984 that I read. Corcoran runs for three hours and some say it needs to be that length, others say shorter. Bill Douglas took a long time making the film and there was a lot of discussion. In the end it was his film and we stood by him. We never insisted that a director keep one scene and drop another because it's their individuality we are looking for.

And filmmakers will trust you because of that attitude.

Yes, that's the key. We seem to have built up a strong bond of trust.

Can we talk about this trust in partnership between finance and filmmaker? How does it work for writers?

An Italian co-commissioner a script from a writer and I think it's important that the trust of Channel 4 is the starting point in our commissioning script. There have been experiences in the past, say in the BBC Production Board, where a group made scripts and finally arrives at a decision, and there must be a question as to whether a degree of risk and advantage goes out the window if a project is passed over so that an agreement can be reached more easily on another. That same applies to Channel 4. The same applies to the new Film Finance Corporation.

I welcome the fact that British Screen has now (Kevin Kinnear) and Simon Ralph is running that and as far as I know it really is his decision as to what time he goes with. The same applies to Channel 4. I have to make the decision. There are a number of new writers and we can't always give a comforted for a screenplay, so we might advise to have a treatment first.

What sort of license would you give?

We'd pay £2000 for a treatment.

And a screenplay?

The minimum is £12,500 — up to the acceptance of the first draft plus another 50 per cent on proposal photography, so for most scripts we remark about £25,000.

How many starts and finishes in one year? I ask this because often there is a problem when a culture is based on the notion of success, yet in creative work the level of failure is often very conspicuous. If a script gets investment and it doesn't work then that is seen as a 'real' decision...

When the script of my daughter's *Laureate* and playing *Andy* is ready on budget 4 and pay 100 per cent of the money in. I think you've got to decide to go with a script or not. If so, then you back it and ensure it goes into production. I know that sounds easy but there are some times where we've had to back up and after money too (but we've found it) quickly and we haven't spent money finding the money!

We consider about 2000 projects a year and of course a number of scripts are considered complete, but when we've gone ahead with a project bought in that way we usually ask for their work on the script. If we are interested in an uncompleted script then we buy it. I think it's only right that we should show a positive interest in the script.

by buying it, and that means paying a producer to make the arrangements with the writer to acquire the script, so there'd be some money for the legal side of the contract and perhaps £1000 for the producer.

We keep the development down as low as we can so I don't see the point of splash ing your money until you're absolutely sure you've got the script you want. This year we might commission 12 or 18 screenplays and I'll be very satisfied if three of those went into production. You've simply got to give writers the opportunity to write, pay them to do it. The script cost is such a small sum in the overall budget and it's sensible to keep it low because you fear of such vast sums being spent in America on screenplays, which seems to me unnecessarily generous.

Can you talk about Channel 4's experience with co-productions?

We do some, not many. We did one a few years ago called *A Song For Europe* based on the story of Stanley Adams, who worked for the Swiss chemical conglomerate Hoffmann-La Roche.

It was a story that moved from Sweden to Italy, France and England. Most of the time we were able to cast genuinely bilingual who spoke English as they did in the real story and there were only two scenes that were subtitled. So happily it was English language but beyond that we do subtitled. We have it, and with very few exceptions we have nothing but subtitles.

There aren't many true co-productions, but we have a reciprocal arrangement with ZDF where we put the same amount of money into each other's films and screen them. A lot of our funding is with British Screen, though we did give *Agnes* more money to complete *Agnes* from rough cut by pre-purchasing the UK theatrical rights.

Do you think you're creating a national image with Channel 4 films?

I think many of the writers and directors are dealing with subjects which they're familiar with, with particular areas of time and place, so they will be perceived as British. Time from the outside I've no doubt we have brought to British cinema a kind of film that was not around before 1960. Maybe it's more subtle, and they certainly have the audience with something to carry away with them other than the usual adventure-story films we are so often inclined to view which are for the moment but do not give us anything to think about.

I asked the question because it is perceived that Channel 4 is producing a significant number of films which have come to represent the current image of England. Australian film financing is to a large degree supported by government agencies charged with the task of creating an Australian cinema, an Australian image. Perhaps this is mistaken and not conscious.

It's not conscious. I think you've got to go for the very best talent and I think some of the best expression is on contemporary subjects. Writers writing about what they know, directors discovering as we vividly and intelligently what society is today. That will actually do the job. You can't prescribe a national cinema, it can only possibly emerge.

R·E·V·I·E·W·S

- Barfly
- Black Cannon Incident
- Can't Buy Me Love
- Cry Freedom
- The Family
- Fatal Attraction
- Made In Heaven
- Manon Des Sources
- Planes, Trains And Automobiles
- Rita, Sue And Bob Too
- Sherman's March
- Tampopo
- 28 Up

• CRY FREEDOM

Perhaps the most fascinating aspect of Richard Attenborough's *Cry Freedom* is the effect that it will have on South African audiences, if they are ever allowed to see it.

Technically, this extraordinarily moving and mostly factual account of a young black radical leader, Steve Biko, and the blundered white newspaper editor whom he recruits, Donald Woods, has been cleared by *Proensa's* censors for screening from April.

But it is not up to the censors to judge a film's political impact. That is for the *Botsa* Government to decide. Whatever the artistic merits and demands of this long and sometimes lavish production, it is certain that for South Africans of all colors that is emotional, social and, above all, political dynamite.

If ever a country lost itself as a subject for close cinematic examination, South Africa, with all its wonders and horrors, is it. Oddly, after all this time, *Cry Freedom* is almost alone in striving to make a definitive moral statement on apartheid in a form with international mass appeal.

Attenborough, clearly advised by Woods, on whose book this script is largely based, starts *Cry Freedom* by establishing a replica of the Crossroads squatter camp near Cape Town and, along with it, any doubt that this film will treat the white authorities kindly.

Indeed, the actors who portray the security police enjoy a slackened vigilance that seems excessive to anyone who has not seen the real thing. Yet even John Thaw's Police Minister Kruger, who is accurately portrayed as taking a sacking National Party rally that Biko's death "leaves me cold", gets a chance to rattle off a few historical justifications for the Afrikaner's hereditarily defensive attitude.

Thaw, who seems never to have recovered from being a television detective, is made up to resemble a short, fat Cary Grant with big, black-rimmed spectacles and an accent that must make Jimmy Kruger turn in his grave.

Two dingo filmmakers never seem to get right are South African accents and cheery newspaper front pages. Attenborough is no exception in *Cry Freedom*, on either count. But the two main characters, Kevin Kline's Woods and Denzel Washington's Biko, are superbly cast and for the most part convincing, accurate and all. Woods, by all accounts, is much more charming than Kline's portrayal and Washington's evocation of Biko is a little too easily for comfort.

These are details, however, and they

fail to detract from Woods' transformation from what Biko calls "a white liberal who clings to all the advantages of the white world" to one who in the end is prepared to sacrifice the white South African way of life — and more — to set the truth about Biko's ghastly death once out.

What is particularly notable is that the Woods character never loses his almost naive anti-drama ("I was thinking like a fool," he says after ordering police off his property at gunpoint) while managing to dominate the film — some would say at Biko's expense.

Biko, apart from the occasional re-appearance in flashback form, is whisked off to his death in a police Land Rover halfway through the film, leaving Woods to record his death as a martyr,



CRY FREEDOM: Kevin Kline and Denzel Washington

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David Williamson, Ray Harryhausen, Peter Weir, Anthony Geinins, Gillian Armstrong, Ken S. Hall, *The Cars That Ate Paris*

Number 2 (April 1974)

Censorship, Frank Moorhouse, Mookiee Roff, Sandy Harbutt, *Film under Attack: Between The Wars, Alone Purple*

Number 3 (July 1974)

Richard Brennan, John Pagadapolous, Mookiee Roff, Sandy Harbutt, *Film under Attack: Between The Wars, Alone Purple*

Number 10 (September-October 1975)

Ragusa Calima, Philippe Moire, Krystof Zanussi, Marco Ferreri, Marco Bellocchio, *pay cinema*

Number 11 (January 1977)

Emile de Antonio, *Mr Robt*, Samuel Z. Arkoff, Roman Polanski, *Sad Blas*, *The Picture Show Man*

Number 12 (April 1977)

Ken Loach, Tom Hayden, Donald Sutherland, *Don Darling*, John Ford, *John Ford's America*, John Scott, *Days Of Hope*, *The Greeting Of Women*

Number 13 (July 1977)

Louis Malle, Paul Cox, John Power, *Jeannine Sorel*, Peter Sykes, *Reverend Bertolucci*, *In Search Of Ape*

Number 14 (October 1977)

Phil Hayes, Matt Carroll, Eric Rohmer, Terry Zogman, John Huston, *Love's Kingdom*, *The Last Wave*, *Blue Fire Lady*

Number 15 (January 1978)

Tom Cowan, Francesco Truffaut, John Faulkner, Stephen Wallace, the Travell Brothers, *Ken Langan cinema*, *The Inbetween*, *The Ghost Of Jerome Bonardelli*

Number 16 (April-June 1978)

Gunnel Lindblom, John Dugan, Steven Spielberg, Tom Jeffrey, *The Africa Project*, Swedish cinema, *David*, *Patrick*

Number 17 (August-September 1978)

Bill Sam, Isabelle Huppert, Brian May, Polish cinema, *Apocalypse*, *The Night The Power*

Number 18 (October-November 1978)

John Langan, Sonia Borg, Alan Tanner, *Indian cinema*, *Orlando*, *Calvin's Child*

Number 19 (January-February 1979)

Anthony Geinins, Stanley Harris, Jeremy Thomas, Andrew Sarris, sponsored documentaries, *Blue Air*

Number 20 (March-April 1979)

Ken Cameron, Claude Lelouch, Jim Shanss, French cinema, *My Brilliant Career*

Number 22 (July-August 1979)

Bruce Petty, Luciano Angeli, Albie Thomas, *Stax*, *Albee's Birthday*

Number 24 (December 1979-January 1980)

Brian Tranchard-Smith, Ian Holmes, Arthur Hiller, Jerry Seinfeld, *Brazilian cinema*, *Handgun*

Number 25 (February-March 1980)

Daved Putnam, Janet Stockland, *Ensemble de Roche*, Peter Haiman, *Chen Reaction*, *Sir*

Number 26 (April-May 1980)

Charles H. Joffe, Jerome Holmes, Malcolm Smith, *Australian nationalism*, Japanese cinema, Peter Weir, *Water Under The Bridge*

Number 27 (June-July 1980)

Randa Kassar, Peter Yeldham, Donald Richie, Richard Franklin's anthology of *United Hollywood*, the New Zealand film industry, *Gravel Gravel Gravel*

Number 28 (August-September 1980)

Bob Ellis, Un Woch, Edward Woodward, Lino Brocka, Stephen Wallace, *Philippine cinema*, *Cosmos*, *The Last Outlaw*

Number 29 (October-November 1980)

Bob Ellis, Un Woch, Edward Woodward, Lino Brocka, Stephen Wallace, *Philippine cinema*, *Cosmos*, *The Last Outlaw*

Number 30 (February 1982)

Kevin Dokson, Brian Keeney, Sonia Hoffmann, Michael Rabbo, *Blow Out*, *Breaker Morant*, *Body Heat*, *The Man From Snowy River*

Number 31 (April 1982)

Stephen Madigan, Jackie Weaver, *Carlos Saura*, Peter Linton, *Woman in Drama*, *Monkey Gap*

Number 32 (June 1982)

Geoff Burrows, George Miller, James Ivory, Phil Hayes, Joan Fontana, Tony Williams, *Law and Insurance*, *For East*

Number 33 (August 1982)

Heidi Moe, Richard Mason, Aya Brown, David Milkin, Derek Granger, *Norwegian cinema*, *National Film Archive*, *We Of The Never Never*

Number 34 (October 1982)

Hani Salim, Michael Ritchie, Pauline Kael, Woody Hughes, Ray Barrett, *My Dinner With Andre*, *The Return Of Captain Jack*

Number 35 (December 1982)

Igor Kautin, Paul Schuster, Peter Tammie, Liana Casan, Colin Higgins, *The Year Of Living Dangerously*

Number 36 (March 1983)

Mal Gibson, John Wince, Ian Pringle, Agnes Varda, *copyright*, *Strleboard*, *The Man From Snowy River*

Number 38 (May-June 1983)

Sydney Pollack, Deney Lawrence, Graeme Clifford, *The Damocles*, *Canter He Might Hear You*

Number 44-45 (April 1984)

David Stevens, Simon Wincer, Susan Lambert, *Street Kids*, a personal history of *Cinema Papers*

Number 46 (July 1984)

Paul Cox, Russell Mulcahy, Alan J. Pakula, Robert Duvall, Jeremy Irons, *Sumo Storybook*, *Waterford*, *The Boy To The Bush*, *The Woman Soldiers*, *Shall We*

Number 47 (August 1984)

Richard Lowenstein, Wim Wenders, David Bradbury, Sophia Tulkiewicz, Hugh Hudson, *Robbery Under Arms*

Number 48 (October-November 1984)

Ken Cameron, Michael Parkinson, Jim Sardi, Thom Gross, *Bodyline*, *The Slim Dusty Movie*

Number 49 (December 1984)

Alan Raites, Brian McKenna, Angela Punch McGee, Enno Moore, Jane Campion, *honor films*, *Nel Lynne*

Number 50 (February-March 1985)

Stephen Wallace, Ian Pringle, Walerian Borowczyk, Peter Schick, Bill Conti, Brian May, *The Last Station*, *Bliss*

Number 51 (May 1985)

Lino Brocka, Harrison Ford, Noel Huetherford, Dusan Makavejev, Ernie Koh, *Winters*, *The Naked Country*, *Mad Max Beyond Thunderdome*, *Robbery Under Arms*

Number 52 (July 1985)

John Schlesinger, Gillian Armstrong, Ann Hinkle, *soap opera*, *TV news*, *film advertising*, *Don't Call Me Girls*, *For Love Alone*, *Double Souls*

Number 53 (September 1985)

Styven Brown, Nicolas Roeg, Vincent Ward, Hacer Crawford, Erni Kautin, *New Zealand film and television*, *Return To Eden*

Number 54 (November 1985)

Graeme Clifford, Bob Weir, John Goodman, *Marlene Golan*, *Wits And Bards*, *The Great Bookie Robbery*, *The Lancaster Miller Affair*, *rock videos*

Number 55 (January 1986)

James Stewart, Debbie Byrne, Brian Thompson, Paul Verhoeven, *Derek Weddings*, *The Right Hand Man*, *Braville*, *boon marketing*

Number 56 (March 1986)

Fred Schepers, Dennis O'Rourke, Brian Tranchard-Smith, John Hargreaves, *stands*, *single machines*, *Dead End Drive-In*, *The More Things Change*, *Kangaroo*, *Tracy*

Number 58 (July 1986)

Alan, Reinhard Hauff, Oren Weller, the *Dreamtheater* franchise, *The Kings Dances*, *Great Expectations*, *The Unfold Story* and *The Last Frontier*

Number 59 (September 1986)

Robert Atkins, Paul Cox, Lino Brocka, Agnes Varda, *the AH Awards*, *The Movers*

ISSUES TABLE

Number 50 (November 1984)
Australian Television: Franco
Zeffirelli, Orson, Radio Texas, Bill
Bennett, Detach Cinema, Movies
By Microchip

Number 51 (January 1987)
Days in Silence, Alan Cox,
Roman Polanski, Howling at,
Philippe Mora, Martin Amis,
film in South Australia

Number 52 (March 1987)
Screen Violence, David Lynch,
Dary Grant, The Story Of The
Italy Gang, AIDS conference,
Production barometer, film
France

Number 53 (May 1987) Gillian
Armstrong, Anthony Geinins,
Chris Haywood, The Scorpions,
Elmore Leonard, Landoloffs,
Troy Kennedy Martin, For
Who's Big Adventure, Jilted

Number 54 (July 1987)
Natalie, Dennis Hopper, Mel
Gibson, Vladimir Cosma,
Jennifer, Bruce Trenchard-
Smith, Chastubers

Number 55 (September 1987)
Angela Carter, Wim Wenders,
Joan Penn Gorn, Dennis
Jerman, Gerald L'Ecuyer,
Gustav Hasford, Poor Man's
Dance, AFI Awards



Number 56 (November 1987)
Australian screenwriters,
Cinema and China, James
Bond, James Claydon, Video,
Who's That Girl, De Larentis,
New World, The Navigator

Number 57 (January 1988)
The Poor My Movie Book, John
Dolan, George Miller, Jim
Jarmusch, Russian operas,
winner in film, shooting in
Yemen, Gena A. Goolbs,
Witnessing in Ghana

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• THE FAMILY

Elsewhere Scolia's gentle and humorous inspection of a bourgeois family from the turn of the century in the emphasis is a finely orchestrated work, rich in subtle rhythms and detailed textured images that speak of an almost Charkovian sensitivity about its subject matter. But despite its more worthy performances and directorial assurance, this movie is all dressed up with nowhere to go. Not that it suffers from the ephemeral personal excesses of the worst films of the European art movie of the twenties and early thirties — Scolia is too intelligent a filmmaker to indulge in such banality. But the movie is limited in the sense that it does not penetrate one's imagination in any appreciable sense of the term.

One can't say that *The Family* lacks conceptual and visual clarity or that it is crippled by tiresome cliché. Ultimately, *The Family* disappoints because it does not take any large creative risks with its potentially interesting material. Scolia's sentimental humanism, augmented by an atmospheric romantic style and a consistently inquisitive camera eager to explore the faces of his characters and their cluttered rooms in the hope of revealing their souls, is a problem. And there is a continuous unapologetic urge to formulate a picture of a family's history over three generations as representative of the human condition. Thus, too, spoils the movie as so many unfortunate ways.

Solia's propensity to sentimentalize has sharply narrowed story line until it takes over the movie. It tends to overshadow some of *The Family's* better qualities: its impressive compositional unity and sensitive performances. Vittorio Gassman is particularly good as Carlo, a melancholic self-centered professor of literature. What we see throughout this tenderly observed movie is Carlo's destiny being forged by the traditional and internal logic of the European extended family.

Two other exceptional performances need mentioning. Fausto Amatori as Adriano, the independent concert pianist who is Carlo's near-on-line, is quite remarkable. These long-term desire for each other is finally consummated after some 30 years in a scene of extreme anguish and hesitation, characterized by effective Wagnerian storm effects. Then there is Philippe Noiret, a performer of masterly refinement, in a small church role. Carlo, an argumentative soul, gets involved in a ridiculous discussion with Noiret's character about the finer points of Italian and French culture.

The Family does not belong to the experimental avant-garde and of the European art film as characterized by the highly individualistic works of Antonioni, Resnais or Godard — works noted for their narrative ambiguity and subjective residues of characterization. Instead, what we see is a far more traditional art movie, embodying some

of the more main stream and mythic conventions of the classical narrative cinema that are based on its cause and effect logic of narrative representation. *The Family* does not entirely follow some of the definitive critical ideas of the European art movie, such as psychologically complex characters confronted with their own emotions and loosely defined narratives that go against the classical conceptions of time and space located in contemporary narrative cinema. The movie does display these features, but in a much more subdued form.

What we do experience in Scolia's use of certain narrative and visual devices which are central to his filmic sensibility and have been identified by Roberto Caluso and Gerard Hoey in their helpful review of one of the director's more recent popular and critical successes, *Le Roi* (Cinema Paper 50, February-March, 1983). Like *Le Roi*, the action of *The Family* occurs within the confines of one locale — in this case, a 19th century large family apartment in this harmonically scaled universe we follow the countless personal events that constitute the complex history of his family — a history of domestic calm and turbulence which parallels the more public socio-political history of 19th century Italy happening outside the apartment. This larger history of fascism, war, the cold war, the student unrest of the sixties and the subsequent two decades of recession has been virtually displaced. It is barely glimpsed except for the occasional shot from one of the apartment windows, where we see workers going to work, children playing or an organ grinder entertaining a few people. Radio, television and newspapers are also occasionally shown disseminating information on the almost absent

history of a nation undergoing the turmoil of modern life. Thus Scolia foregrounds a more intimate popular history as represented by the ongoing intimate activities of his characters bound by their common familial ties.

The movie employs several neat situations (arguably too neat in terms of its own closure) essential to its underlying theme which can be summed up as "family life just keeps going on", thanks to the inherent representative power of the extended family. At the start of the movie, we meet a large family preparing for a group portrait. (Gassman's character is a baby at this point.) The portrait comes back to us in the movie's concluding scene, only this time Carlo is 80 years old and sits where his grandfather sat as the original portrait that opens up Scolia's work, after the first of several elaborate travelling shots down the apartment's long corridor. The notion of the extended family as a site for repetition and growth is underlined by a series of short scenes that occur before the concluding portrait sequence. Carlo's grandson is seen opening the apartment's front door to many old and new members of the family.

Whenever it thinks, *The Family* is well structured and performed. Its greatest sin is that it hesitates to engage in a more probing examination of its subject matter.

John Gossman

THE FAMILY Directed by Mario Scolia. Producer: Franco Carrozzini. Screenplay: Ruggiero Maccioni. Film Score: Ennio Morricone. Director of Photography: Riccardo Marchionni. Editor: Francesco Milestini. Production Designer: Luciano Piumi. Music: Lorenzo Favetti. Cost Designer: Giovanni Giannicola. Production Office: Harry Adami (Milano), Stefania Garofalo (Brescia), Philippe Noiret (Lyon). Costa: Enzo Pizzini. Film cop. by (Gruppo) Fiumi. Italian Production Company: Les Films associés, Paris. Film Distributed by: Mafilm. R.R.L. Cinema 8 in 4. Running Time: 107 minutes. Premiere: February 1983.



THE FAMILY Scolia's tale of the century

F A T A L

A T



HAVE TODAY, GONE TOMORROW
Michael Douglas and a doomed robot

The family that kills together stays together
— *Fahrenheit 451* (The New Yorker,
October 28, 1983, p.155)

Fatal Attraction starts out as a romantic comedy, suddenly becomes a suspense thriller and, in its final scenes, changes course again to opt for horror. As in *Psycho* *Meets* *For Me*, a classic of the broader-revenge cycle of thriller films, the revenge of the spurned woman becomes more horrifying as the narrative progresses. *Fatal Attraction* is a very successful thriller, a story of psychological disturbance which has the power to grip and chill its audience even as women which use backhanded connotations of the horror genre and one over-the-top scene which is pure schlock. A fan of both Hitchcock and Chaboud, the director, Adrian Lyne (*Flashdance*, \$5; *Wishy*) has learnt his lesson well although without the brilliance and originality of his mentors. However, compared with *Psycho*, a major problem does arise from the fact that it uses the device of gothic rupture in order to seduce and terrify its audience.

If *Fatal Attraction* had made it clear from the beginning that it was a horror film, then the audience could have settled back for a night of thrills and chills. Women as monstrous-figures is a conventional figure of the horror film (*Reptilian*, *The Exorcist*, *Ante*, *Rebel*, *Shower*) and of literature (the macabreism of Gothic novels), and myth (*Medusa*, the *Straw*). But *Fatal Attraction* is duplicitous, wearing the garb of an adult, social issue film, then that of a suspense thriller in order to hide its true nature — and as a result, the issues at stake — until the last half hour when its horrific skeleton is fully revealed. Consequently, much of the horror (particularly the robot scene) that is generated towards the end seems misplaced; it does not develop logically from the character of Alex, is not fully established, but rather from the conventions of the horror film which are imposed on the narrative towards the end. Most important, the film's multiple generic format means that as the Alex (*Glenn Close*) figure is transformed into a menacing, sinister undercurrent sympathy for her point of view is lost; this would be fine if the film had not initially given the erroneous impression that it was about to deal seriously with her position as the 'wronged woman'.

Feminists are justified in arguing that Alex's position as the 'wronged woman' is unfairly presented. On one level, the narrative is a female revenge fantasy — the expression of every woman's anger when she feels that the reality is just a overnight stand. The problem is that the events are portrayed from the man's point of view, not the woman's. Contrary to Lyne's denial, the Alex persona does represent a negative portrayal of the independent woman. She is made to wear feminist clothes about "we for its own sake" and independent "adult relationships" and

TRACTION

then she is transformed into a half-wedding occasion who all along really only wanted a home, husband and family. When she begins her prolonged attack on Dan (Michael Douglas) and his yuppie family (beautiful wife, adorable daughter and cute dog) and begins to undermine his role as male protector, the audience are suitably bemused here. "I think Lynne found the film very scary," says Lynne. . . "The last 25 minutes of the film, if you are it with 300 or 600 people in America, is very extraordinary. They scream and they yell and they chant at the screen as Michael Douglas to get the Hell up there and kill her. It's almost like a Lynch mood" (*Age*, "Entertainment Guide", 22 1.1988, p1) If it is a Lynch mood then one is tempted to take the analogy further and argue that as in all Lynchings the victim has not had a fair trial — the jury even be innocent.

Adrian Lyons claims that the film is also presented from her point of view but his comments indicate that he has a very superficial understanding of notions of identification. Lyons stresses that he empathised with her brother: "When the camera is in his office and offers him tickets to a show, I find it horrifying. And when she's alone in her bed, clicking the light on and off while he's having fun at the bowling alley with his friends . . . She's totally desolate. Whatever she does, I think she really loves the man" (*Debutant*, 28 8.1987, p22). In the interview from which these comments are taken, Lyons appears to think that because the film offers these responses it is also that, in part, from her point of view. Lyons is confusing filmic point of view, which clearly belongs to Dan Gallagher (he is present in nearly all scenes, the subjective shots not largely his, or his family's) with emotional identification. Lyons's pity really amounts to nothing more than potentiation.

Certainly, there are moments when one's sympathies are with her but these are only fleeting. The strongest argument for identifying with Alex is that the alternative is pretty disastrous. If we don't side with her, then we are left with Dan who is basically dishonest, weak and uninteresting (judging from audience response, however), he is far more sympathetic than Alex. Or perhaps he only becomes truly sympathetic when his family comes under threat. The decision to make Dan Gallagher married and the father of an adorable little girl (the Clint Eastwood persona in *Play All Day For Me* does not have a family) works brilliantly to path audience sympathies completely onto Gallagher's side.

Fatal Attraction pretends to be a sophisticated film about a one-night stand; it is really about the male fear and fantasy of women as 'ravishing bitch'. From the first moment when we see Alex Forrest with her blonde hair swept high from her forehead and flouting around her hair in serpentine curls we are reminded of a Medusa or

Medea. Even the first comment about her, made by Dan's legal buddy, Jimmy (Steven Parker), alludes to the Medusa legend. When the returns his flirtatious comment with a cold stare, he whispers under his breath to Dan: "If looks could kill!" Later, Dan even makes a joke to Alex about 'looking': "I'm not saying anything . . . I'm not even going to look." Such a figure is not new to the cinema. Since the silent period, male scriptwriters and directors have been making films about the notorious *femme fatale*, the woman who threatens first to seduce and then devour her helpless victim: she usually turns up his home and finally on her journey of destruction. We can trace her cinematic evolution from the blood-sucking vampire of the silent period to the *femme fatale* of horror film side to the monstrous-feminine of the modern horror film.

Alex is everywoman — even from a male viewpoint. Her image is constructed to represent at least five male fantasies, fantasies which overlap but nevertheless are clearly recognizable. Firstly, she is woman-as-witch, sent from Hell to weave a spell over her victim while offering him the pleasures of Paradise. Then, she becomes 'the tragic woman', like Madame Butterfly, the would prefer to commit suicide rather than stand in his way or live him in another. Thirdly, she is the Liberated Woman, the woman who, according to the myth, appears to be independent and happy on the surface but underneath is desperate for a man. Fourthly, she is the monstrous *femme fatale*, the cold, cruel woman who uses her sex to trap men in order to destroy them. Finally, she is the monstrous-feminine, woman as 'other', another, alien, a creature who lives outside the boundaries of civilization and who must be destroyed.

In short, Alex comes direct from Hell. Hence, the setting of her apartment in the wholesale meat district where the butcher's first runs through the night. Hence, her Medusa-like appearance. Hence, her final powers. She is larger than life. Witch, Medusa, Monster, the Black Widow Spider who devours her mate after copulation. The difference is that Alex Forrest, although a version of the *femme fatale*, is actually in love with her man. Unlike her sisters of the night, she is not totally cold and calculating. She is in part *femme fatale* and in part, like Madame Butterfly, a passionate, abused woman. Her representation is drawn from the passionate lover of the woman's sublimations and the *femme fatale* of film noir. Thus, the Alex Forrest persona represents a series hybrid figure; a combination of different aspects of woman concentrated in one — a total fantasy figure. It is this side to her character, this difference in relation to the *femme fatale* which holds the key to a fuller interpretation of the film and the exact nature of its 'fatal attraction'.

Because Alex is a creation of male fantasy, she comes to represent all things to Dan, most significantly, she signifies a figure onto whom Gallagher displaces his underlying fears and anxieties about life, women and marriage in general. She is the 'other side' of his wife, Beth (Anne Archer) — that part of his wife which drew him into marriage and happy families in the first place. Initially, Dan only wanted a one-night stand. Alex represents the possibility of an escape, an opportunity for Dan to flee his present. The problem is that Alex fails to leave — he doesn't. She wants a commitment. She wants to know where she stands, particularly after she learns she is pregnant. She begins to sound like a prospective wife. Dan's decision to have a sexual relationship with Alex clearly suggests that he is a little fed up with the dull routine of marriage. The last thing he wants is another 'wife'.

The words which tumble from Alex's lips, her initial desperate actions to keep Dan with her, are directed to the camera. She pleads with him, screams outside, tells him she is pregnant. He even replies with the stock comment: "How do you know it's mine?" It is as if Dan, nine years after his marriage, is treating a nightman about the house which trapped him in the first place. Alex signifies woman at her most desperate, most clinging, most devastating. She is not simply every married man's nightmare. She is *every man's* nightmare.

She is also rejected by most male members of the audience probably because she comes to represent that aspect of woman which is held up to extreme ridicule in our society, a woman who can't get a man — a figure with whom no self-respecting male would wish to identify. For the special preview sessions of *Fatal Attraction*, the Russell Street cinema aggregated the audience. Apparently the female audience was far more vocal in its abuse of Alex than the male audience. Perhaps the women spectators felt more threatened when Alex began to attack the family. Cries of "You bitch!" reverberated through the cinema. Alex becomes a social pariah, the clinging, demanding, dangerous woman, the woman who has spoiled the game because she refuses to abide by what Dan refers to as 'the rules'. She signifies what men often describe as the 'offending' side of women — the side which threatens their notions of 'masculinity', that is, the free, independent, footloose male. But Dan is already married, his independence already undermined.

It is no accident that these events occur just as Dan is about to make a momentous change and move to the country where life appears to be even more dreamy. Even though the film represents Dan's married life as perfect, there is (regardless of whether or not the director intended this),



HAIR TODAY GORRILL TOMORROW
Glenn Close of the story gaze

a plastic lid to the packaged film, something numerous about married yuppie-dom. Initially Dan sees Alex as an ally, someone who would provide excitement and pleasure — even if only for a weekend. Once Alex leads to deliver the goods, she comes to signify more than the 'other side' of Dan's wife, through a process of displacement she begins to represent a darker aspect of his own unconscious. Like the *James Fatale* of the Kotter (also a male fantasy), Alex begins to destroy the 'barfly' itself — something which Dan, in his darkest dream, may wish to happen but could never admit. Significantly, she threatens the key scene of the happy family: family car, jet, child, wife, husband, home. (No doubt a video game is already on the drawing board.) She is, finally, the suspect for all of Dan's anxieties and fears about women.

If Dan, like his film noir counterpart, had usually been given a darker side to his personality, he would have been more interesting. There it, however, a suggestion that the marriage lacks passion. After the hook launch, Dan appears to want to make love to his wife but his daughter has taken his place in the marital bed. On another occasion, lovemaking is interrupted by the telephone. These small details, however, are never explored further. At one point Dan confesses that although *Masters of Deceit* is his favorite opera, as a boy he was terrified by the white noise and clanked under the theater seat to avoid watching. It would appear that his fear of passionate female emotions has haunted him throughout life. But the film never explores his character further. The Dan Gallagher persona is one-dimensional, bland, superficial. Any anxieties he might feel are never developed, rather they are displaced onto the persona of Alex. *Fatal Attraction* suffers from the conventions of both the family melodrama and film noir but lacks the complexities and intelligence of both. The film's way out is simply to opt for horror which it does very efficiently and effectively ironically, however, the final screeching scene does make some interesting (probably unintentional) points through the visual and narrative parallels it draws between the two women.

Both women are beautiful, both are in love with Dan, both fight desperately to keep Dan. In the final scene, when Beth is in the bathroom preparing to take a hot bath, she rubs the soaps from the mirror. Instead of seeing her own reflection she sees the face of Alex; Alex is her sister eye, her Doppelgänger revealed for an instant in the mirror. In the end, she carries out the murder of 'the other woman' which Alex had planned to exact. Ironically, Dan attempts to drown Alex in the bath which was intended for his wife, Beth. Part of the reason for the pitch of emotional intensity which is generated at the end of *Fatal Attraction* is that the parallels between the two women are more clearly drawn here. Both are strong, unrepentant, fatal. Both are capable of killing to get what they want. And they both want Dan. Thus, the final shot of the house slowly perishing becomes ironic not because it suggests that 'nothing will be the same again' but rather because it states that 'everything will be the same again — forever and ever'.

The final bathroom scene is also powerful because it draws an image and motif which are central to the horror genre, particularly those of water, knives and blood — classic images associated with birth. The motif of a woman drowning or of women associated with water runs through myth (the Ledaist), art (*The Birth of Venus*), and literature (*Hamlet*) as well as film (*Psycho*, *Requiem for a Dream*, *Corrie*, *The Shining*, *Deliverance*). These instances signify either moments of birth or death, but in both the association of women and water always signifies, at a deeper level, the processes of birth. In the horror film, women sometimes rise from the water in a new and frightening form. The climax of *Fatal Attraction*, its images of water, blood and knife, draws much of its power from these mythic associations. The shot of blood running down a woman's leg is also a central motif of the horror film, suggesting death, birth, menstruation, rape. The bathroom scene also refers back to the same with the rubber — another death which occurs in association with a knife, blood and water. The death which Dan hoped for early on, of course, was that of their unborn 'child' which — if it existed — would also have died in the bath. When Dan attempts to drown Alex, he is trying to murder not simply a woman who is threatening his life but also 'a woman and her child' (Alex's wifely woman!) — the origin of his daily nightmare. A more appropriate — and honest — title for the film may well have been, *Fatal Woman*, subtitled — 'Fantasy Of A Trapped Husband'.

Barbara Creed

CASTAL ATTRIBUTES: Directed by Adrian Lyne. Producers: Shirley R. Jaffe and Sherry Lansing. Screenplay: James Cameron. Director of photography: Howard Anderson. Editor: Michael Kahn. Production designer: Bill Scarle. Music: George Yengo. Cost: Michael Douglas (then Gallagher), Glenn Close (then Fatale), Anne Archer (Beth Gallagher), Pam Fiddyman (Lillian Allen Gallagher), Stuart Preston (Jimmy), Dan Fofie (Fido), Fred Steiner (Patricia). Produced in company (title) among Distributor: LIP. Screen 116 minutes. USA, 1987.

• BARFLY

It is said that *Barfly's* director, Barbet Schroeder, desperately wanted to make this film. He spent seven years trying to get the project off the ground. Finally, he went into the Los Angeles office of Cannon and told a secretary that unless Minkheim Gillen agreed to see him, Schroeder would cut off one of his own fingers, then and there. He got his appointment. He made his move.

Apocryphal or not, it is a story that fits perfectly one of *Barfly's* themes: art causes from suffering. There's a compelling irony also that people who offer rewards of material comfort to an artist are actually offering destruction. These notions are undoubtedly present in the life and work of Charles Bukowski, who wrote the screenplay for *Barfly*, but they are underlain by a certain black humour. Mario Perrotti's Bukowski adaptation, *Tale Of Ordinary Madness*, took it as deadly serious and missed the perverse streak in these chronicles of Los Angeles low life available, for the most part, in high-priced paperback editions from Black Sparrow Press.

In *Barfly* the playfulness and the manipulation are there, particularly in Mickey Rourke's performance. It's a delicately agonizing parody, measured and measured at the same time, finding physical equivalents for those manipulations and contradictions: a shambling, self-hacked arthritic gorkle walk, a sudden jerching stiffness that can be transformed by a half-smile, a hunched, arthritic smile.



BARFLY Mickey Rourke succumbs to the muse and bit

On another level, *Rosette* and fellow barfly Faye Dunaway are giving us a parallel account of the relationship between art and suffering: the actor who's prepared to be judged, the actress who will endure gray hair. Sometimes they seem to have come from another time and place, an era when Hollywood could slum it with charm and style, they are in the gutter, and we are looking at the (movie) stars.

This impression is probably helped by the fact that in an odd way, *Sofly* is a fairy story, filled with temptations, games, trials, prisoners and rituals, with one love at the end of the rainbow, or the bar of the Golden Horn. Henry catches sight of Wanda (Faye Dunaway) across a not very crowded barroom and says wonderingly, "She looks like a distressed golden." Fortunately, she drinks like a suffering artist. They are drawn together, then pulled apart by infidelity: she betrays him for a bottle of whiskey, he is lured into the bed of Tully, a WASP princess magazine editor with a taste for low life prose and low life prose writers. Her persistent denials stress another aspect of the *Sofly* world: true virtue simultaneously affronts and attracts the bourgeois, who want to acquire (and therefore corrupt) them and their work. The elegant Tully wants to give Henry money, security and a place to live so that he can compose in peace, not understanding that peace is the most disruptive thing she could offer him.

In the end, the lightness of *Sofly* is

both its saving grace and its maddening blight. Charm only taken so far, the downbeat bar where most of the action is set becomes as cozy and familiar as Glen, punctuated by bouts of Tom and Jerry violence, peccad by distorted goodbys and drunks who just happen to be geniuses.

Philippe Roule

BARFLY Directed by Robert Swickard. Producers: Robert Swickard, Fred Ross. Titled: Lucille Borsellino (actress), Marlene Quinn, Faye Dunaway. Director of photography: Philip Hays. Editor: Eli Gendin. Production Designer: Bob Jernicko. Cost: \$10,000,000. Running Time: 95 minutes. Fox Distributor (MGM). R. On Release: July 20, 1980. Jack Palance (Guested): J.C. Quince (Guest). Frank Stallone (Guest). Production Company: Cannon/Cosmo/Goodson-Todman. Screen by: Screen USA 1980.

* PLANES, TRAINS AND AUTOMOBILES

There is only one question you should ask of any comic work, and only one condition it should satisfy: did it make you laugh? Application of this criterion makes evaluation very easy and the difference between good and bad, successful and failed, very clear. I can, therefore, report with complete certainty that *Planes, Trains And Automobiles* is a good film, yes, and I would even go further: it is a great film. Here, however, my judgment becomes more speculative as the criterion has not yet been tried, nonetheless I am quite sure that it would make my mother laugh and

possibly even my father. (Isn't there something usually and repellent about a comedy that concludes, "Is that?")

But what comic does that leave for the critic whose realm is precisely the questionable, doubtful and gay? None; and there is its triumph and ultimate sophistication — the awareness of the repressed area degree. John Hughes directs John Candy bawling in bed next to Steve Martin and I pity myself. There is nothing left over, the movie's skills and exhaust itself in its unliking.

This accounts for most of the film and would have done so in a review if it were not for the familiar Hughes' sentimental streak, one that returns on bonding, the bonds of family and companionship.

In *Planes, Trains And Automobiles* it surfaces a number of times, particularly at the end. These moments might be dismissed as breathing space in the chain of gags if it were not for the feeling that though it might not always be present, that sentimentality is never far away, or it will be there in some twisted form.

These moments are the light of outrageous cruelty and mischief Hughes allows himself — always to comic effect. He will violate the very values the film will finally affirm and in so doing make them the more convincingly like. To give you an example of this, but without giving away any of *Planes, Trains And Automobiles*, let's look at a scene from Madison which Hughes wrote and which has many similarities to *Planes*.

Chevy Chase and family are driving across America on holiday. For a part of the journey they have no aunt with them who they are returning home. The old woman is completely obnoxious. Along the way the film. So as not to upset the children, she is told, sitting upright with eyes closed, onto the roof rack. When they arrive at her destination there is no one home to receive the corpse so it is left at the back door with a note attached. Film has hardly ever been so sensitive, yet at the end of *Planes* it is the security of family that Chevy Chase provides and which, however ironically, provides.

In *Planes, Trains And Automobiles* the relationship between Steve Martin and John Candy is, for the most part, abusive and always in the one direction: the one resisting the other's need, strangely constant, for company and cheer to be broadly slowly, very slowly, an understanding develops and where there is understanding, acceptance follows.

Reginald Fennell

PLANES, TRAINS AND AUTOMOBILES Screenplay developed by John Hughes. Screenplay by: Steve Martin, John Candy, John Hughes. Director: John Hughes. Director of Photography: Eli Gendin. Production Designer: Bob Jernicko. Editor: Eli Gendin. Cost: \$10,000,000. Running Time: 95 minutes. Fox Distributor (MGM). R. On Release: July 20, 1980. Jack Palance (Guested): J.C. Quince (Guest). Frank Stallone (Guest). Production Company: Cannon/Cosmo/Goodson-Todman. Screen by: Screen USA 1980.



• CAN'T BUY ME LOVE

The final scene of *Can't Buy Me Love* has Ronnie Miller, after his popularity among the "cool chicks" is pulverized in one swing, back where he was at the beginning of the film — moving Cindy Mancini's front lawn. But where at the opening his status was no higher than that of lower-class boy, this time, as one character observes, "he is an *idiot*." Neither "cool" nor "gok," Ronnie is in a veritable no man's land. His T-shirt, however, has printed on it an image of the solar system and right into the center of that swirl of stars point the words, "You are here." It's evidently a joke among the nerdy and therefore intelligent class of senior high, but it also stands as a metaphor of Ronnie's love for Cindy, for these words point to his heart.

Yet what lurks in and around this loss is the question of breaking through social barriers. Cindy (Amanda Peterson) is the popular cheerleader of the cool chicks, and, importantly, she dreams to be popular. Ronnie (Patrick Dempsey), on the other hand, is a nerd, and as his close friend, Kenneth (Courtney Gains), reminds him, "This is senior high where jocks are jocks, cheerleaders are cheerleaders and us . . . we're us." According to Kenneth, this is the order of things, but it's an order which Ronnie cannot accept or understand. His dream to be popular, and therefore his desire for Cindy, hurls him back to a time as elementary and junior high when dreams like this never existed.

Can't Buy Me Love is a film which juggles a number of things at once, and one of them is economics — the law of supply and demand. As the title sug-

gests, the only means Ronnie has of breaking through the barrier into popularity is to buy into it. His chance arrives in a shopping mall scene. Ronnie has \$1000 to buy a telescope, and while peering through his prospective purchase he spots Cindy, in distress, attempting to bargain for a new dress priced at \$1000. Ronnie offers Cindy the money which she needs to replace exactly her mother's prized dress, which she has damaged. In exchange, she must pretend to be his girlfriend for a month, thus ensuring his popularity. So he's a fairly single Ronnie has something Cindy wants, Cindy has something Ronnie wants.

Moreover, what's involved here with the telescope evokes a series of motifs about Cindy and the stars. Ronnie can be called a kid astronomer, a stargazer more precisely, or someone looking beyond his lot. Thus, as he peers through the telescope, Cindy is his star. In another scene, for example, after he falls from grace and while attempting to get Cindy on the phone, a sign over his bed reads, "Let the stars get in your eyes." Another has both Cindy and Ronnie on the last leg of their (supposedly) fake romance going to the moon. Ronnie makes in a curiously poetic and scientific fashion his description of the moon, on which Cindy comments, "The moon . . . it isn't mysterious or romantic anymore. You haven't spoiled it, you've just changed a little." This scene and Cindy's words are pertinent enough, for if Ronnie is succeeding in changing his status and his values, Cindy is significantly changing her values. This is made clear when in the film's second party sequence — in contrast to the first where she surreptitiously borrows her mother's dress, pre-arranged it's hers, and runs it — Cindy admits to her friends that she is wearing her mother's clothes.

What the title also suggests, however, is that buying into popularity is indeed at loggerheads with love. For as Cindy's values change, from following the precepts of the cool chicks to respect for a certain type of individuality, so do Ronnie's values change as his popularity increases — his loyalty to his former friends begins to flag, and he neglects his love for Cindy. The film could not make this change any more pointed than in the scene of the daily-evil science classroom where an educational film is being screened. As the film ends, Ronnie is seated behind Kenneth, and at first, given the conditions of the classroom, it seems strange to find Ronnie still wearing his sunglasses. Kenneth, in a whisper, reproaches Ronnie for neglecting their traditional Saturday night card game; when an expected response doesn't come, Kenneth reaches over and lifts Ronnie's shades to discover to his chagrin that Ronnie is far away in dreamland. The classroom setting, moreover, is a film about the moon. Thus, although the scene is apparently about loyalty to



CAN'T BUY ME LOVE: Patrick Dempsey and Amanda Peterson get facial

one's friends, it equally concerns Ronnie's love for Cindy because, once again, she is symbolically figured in the street through a sexual motif.

When initially begun as a teenage girl — gaining popularity and gaining Cindy's love — is now broken into two conflicting notions. Perhaps this is what is meant by Ronnie and Cindy's perception for finding "cracks" in the moon. The film plays one off against the other, in the scene mentioned, Cindy becomes classified, not necessarily in the same class as needs, but, like the needs, on the other side of popularity. *Can't Buy Me Love* will evidently pull Ronnie in two different directions when there can only be room for one. For instance, in the school hallway when Cindy approaches Ronnie to approve her new poem, "Broken Moon", he is split between Cindy and the sexual interest expressed by another female colleague only a few paces away. A little later the film repeats a similar incident in the school hallway, this time with Kenneth. Ronnie is chasing Kenneth in a desperate attempt to make up for throwing it into hands at Kenneth's home in a Halloween prank with his jock friends. At the precise moment that Kenneth enters the frame Ronnie's jock friends enter it, and Ronnie switches mood and mood, pulling after Kenneth with a quick change of subject. Up to this point in the film Ronnie has been trying to play out a cute belching act, in turn confirming the contradictory notions. Perhaps here lies the significance of the sign on his father's (Alan Arkin) wagon, a sign Ronnie has on occasion glanced over when on a date. It reads: "Te, Tac, Tye!" It's the trademark of his father's occupation, but by recalling the game it could stand as metaphor of Ronnie's moral predicament — "Te, Tac, Tye, here I go, where I leap I do not know."

Like many a teen movie there is a moral lesson to be learnt here. But the film does not seem overly concerned by the moral in and of itself. In fact, it's fairly straightforward, simple and rather naive — the idea, after all, does indeed say it all. Instead, *Can't Buy Me Love* is more deeply fascinated with how one arrives at it through a series of ironic character misunderstandings, or mis-matches of confrontations and exchanges which are the source of so much humiliation.

In a sense, *Can't Buy Me Love* is so fascinated by humiliation that one could and should call it a comedy of humiliations, with every character, or representative character, humiliated to one degree or another. One of the most telling instances is when Cindy is humili-

Ronnie says to Cindy, as they gaze up at the moon, "We need to talk. How are we going to do it. I'm new in this, so we need to rely on your experience." Cindy interprets it as the next step to furthering their romance when in fact Ronnie is asking about how they will separate the romance before their friends. The next day at school when Cindy says to Ronnie, "We need to talk", Ronnie immediately and mistakenly launches into acting out his role, when Cindy was actually about to address their situation.

Taken from this angle — a series of reflected angles — *Can't Buy Me Love* intricately owns a great deal to the teen movie genre of the same time as its drama of situations tends to pull away from the genre. If, like a personal civil war, the film pulls Ronnie in two directions, then in formal terms, *Can't Buy Me Love* seems to be similarly under two influences (possibly lunar). If its characters are easily typed, if its premise is not especially imaginative, and if its concluding lesson is fairly standard, then what is meant to be appreciated is the way *Can't Buy Me Love* charts our its syntactic

elements, the way it schematises its metaphors in of an order that cannot be easily let go of, or underrepresented. In short, what's fascinating is how simple and yet complicated a film *Can't Buy Me Love* is.

Raffaella Caputo

CAN'T BUY ME LOVE Directed by Steve Rast. Producers: Triad Mount Corporation. Main Cast: Christopher Pennock, John Hargrave, Pam Bowman, Steven Gray, Michael Gambino. Director of Photography: Peter Yates. Editor: Walter Hill. Screenplay: Douglas Conklin. Music: Bruce Robert Pol. Cost: Frank Denney. Filmed at: Atlantic Studios. Cindy: Mariah. Kenneth: Sam. Kenneth's Friend: Bob. Ken's Friend: Mike. The Deputy: Herbert. Development: Eric. Story: John. Plot: William. Company: Pacific Home. Distributor: Village Roadshow. Screen: 35mm. USA. 1981.

★RITA, SUE AND BOB TOO

Harking back to the British Carry On (after war) movies of the late sixties, replete with big breasts and views of naked backs caved through car windows, *Rita, Sue And Bob Too* tries up to no further as a broadly comedy



RITA, SUE AND BOB TOO: George Costigan, Michelle Holmes and Sue Ann Pinnell get down.



28 UP Boy gets set to climb the greasy pole

ments is treated as a prospective partner, not a lover, all part of the film's obvious jokes about mismatching and pre-arranged childhood marriages of class, race, development and compatibility (is this the man, I wonder, that Germaine Greer holds promise for — the male who speaks girls' talk.) Remorse instructs a what is supposed to keep the film in full swing, that an encounter prevents a being the great opus on love and the male-female perspective that would mark it as single-minded.

Second digression is cleverly covered up — he "can't seem to stop thinking Paul", and when the loaves, McIlwain learns that there is no more film to film, she's chosen the chance of a Russ Reynolds movie over a starring role in his picture. In order to clear up that relationship (like all his female encounters, its always unfinished, there's always more to pass over) the Reynolds look-alike is inserted, in what could only be described as reckless coincidence or divine will. Later, the real Reynolds is tracked down, and the fake is "corrected", for this is not a film about fakes.

The second impossibility, the retrospection of a film about war, the danger of being exposed as a perpetrator of racial hatred and, finally, the impossibility of reversing Sherman's role of destruction through the mouth as a kind of balancer of social opinion about global warfare. There is also the notion that history may repeat itself or that the "southern women" was what really led to Sherman's tragic non-recognition by both North and South, a kind of reversal of the romance which Sherman's supporters took a dim view of and for which Southerners branded him a racist. McIlwain breathes on shaky ground on this issue, with amusing results.

There are very few men in Sherman's world. Their lives, naturally enough for someone whose tape recorder is not activated at moments of extreme male sexual encounter (when Paul's questioning, suggests her underwear, or when Karen is talking to be with her on McIlwain has just told us that she was the unattractive golden girl) are of little interest to our "female". But when they show up, they are exposed as willing collaborators in a much larger fake scenario: the first time in a Southern Highland classroom

tion of "strength and vitality" which McIlwain knowingly pursues in his constant comments on "experimentation", the widest historical environments, the fullest show. There's also something desperate in the need to get his women into certain locations: ponds, forests, lakes, mountain tops. As for the several boyfriends, his rivals in love, it is not necessarily significant that they are situated in the film, because Sherman's March is a film about one-to-one relations merely, McIlwain and his chosen subjects. They happen to be generally dominating women, and Sherman's March is not a film which gives the wing the voice.

There is the impossibility of making another *Joan*, although it has clearly been an influential experience for a filmmaker who later to dabble in revolution, women, nonconformists, and then departs back to Boston to teach film and start again. The drama of the 11-hour week, the sleepless nights after failure to make headway with his information, the other world of the isolationists who must the government is not strong enough in the face of the Communists, who must take their survival as anything goes and prepare for the arrival of the holocaust — this is McIlwain the ethnographic filmmaker, the anthropologist who might be commissioned by Granada television, or even Peter Watkins, to follow up these racial extremes of the war and the dismemberment lobby. But the beauty of all the political statements in Sherman's March is that they are cushioned by a profundity of equally obvious loyalty to personal commitment. Did, the Morrison girl with the voice like an angel, says "We are in the latter days where the signs of the times are all around us." It is a lovely epigraph for Sherman's March. McIlwain repeats the Marcher motif by calling the story and putting in a few of his favorite personal things, vestiges of the life he filmed in order to have a life. But Reynolds, a plastic rhinoceros and a kind of available woman.

Finally it is the absence of a hero in 28 UP which deprives it of the edge it should have, but there's also too much of Michael Agard the documentary maker and not enough of Agard the man with the burning question. An examination of class relations in the context of massing and human evolution must, it seems, take as a start, journey back to be of any cultural worth. Sure, these people are fascinating for their contradictions, misadventures and only childhood prejudices, but Agard conducts the interviews like laboratory tests with the control being "normal society": kids, a career, a steady job, a home to go to. The responses are not predictable, but they confirm the film's entire controlling that class systems are constraining Britain.

28 UP's great strength is that its raw material is historical, but it is not given freedom of expression. The film casts a long shadow of promiscuity over the

lives it reveals, unlike the lives in Sherman's March which move, reflect, absorb and drift in and out of view. The people in 28 UP are dogged by their difficulties, their innocence corrupted by the compromises of adulthood. The last moments are the totally out-of-focus responses a recollection of riding a horse or seeing a star looking a girl, or one of the three girl schoolmates answering an April question by saying that they "never think about it, only when you come around every seven years".

Suddenly a diversion on the why I wasn't enjoying this film. Its whole relation to an audience is tied to the notion that we are somehow watching bits and pieces of our own lives on screen, it is the shared experience which Agard is after, the film on collective guilt, the responsibility of a supposedly unseeing white man. There is no room in Agard's philosophy for cynic or un-believers, and people like Neil are forced into explaining these social dysfunctions with a medical diagnosis.

Another presumably "good" life named up when we journeyed to Australia, following Paul, the little boy who wouldn't eat his greens. Although he didn't know whether his prospects would have been better in England or Australia, his wife and Agard certainly did. The margin spoke for him in a steady stream of romantic clichés, showing social conventions as live in wide open spaces and chaotic contraptions. Finally 28 UP, for all its shortcomings and the halfhearted pattern of "normal" life, is both a fake and a satisfying people.

Fake Ruby

28 UP AND 28 UP: Directed and produced by Peter McIlwain. Cinematography edited by Peter McIlwain. Production company: Peter McIlwain Productions (Australia) 4011 (1981) 100 minutes USA, 1981. 28 UP: Directed and produced by Michael Agard. London production: Peter McIlwain. Director of photography: George Jones. Editor: John Scott. Ruby film: Peter McIlwain. Sound: Peter McIlwain. Production company: George Jones. Distributor: Newmarket. 1981. 100 minutes UK, 1981.

◆ RECENT RELEASES

A Supplementary Guide

January

- Dirty Denim (Filmpop)
- Strange To Me (J&J)
- Flowers In The Arm (Village Roadshow)
- Family Business (Haydn)
- Woman Women On The Moon (CUP)
- The Running Man (Village Roadshow)
- The Pinnacles (Fox Columbia)

February

- Love Of Deane (Newmarket)
- Chances (Haydn)
- Three Men And A Baby (Village Roadshow)
- Backbeat (Village Roadshow)
- Backbeat (Fox Columbia)
- The Good Father (Newmarket)
- Orphans (Village Roadshow)
- Wolf Seven (Fox Columbia)
- The Evolving Secret Family (Filmpop)
- Waco (Village Roadshow)
- Mind To Order (Village Roadshow)

*This list is subject to change by distributor



From *The Man From Snowy River*

NATIONAL FICTIONS

by Graeme Turner (Allen and Unwin, 1999) (p. ISBN 069916696, \$24.95 rrp; pb ISBN 069918420, rrp \$12.95)

"Australia offers a new beginning not because it is a land of promise, but, on the contrary because it is geographical, the place of the contest which reveals the possibilities which may emerge from the past and the history which may emerge from colonization."

— *Paradoxical Ideals, quoted in Turner, p12*

National Fictions is both a textbook and a sustained argument. As a textbook it carefully outlines its theoretical assumptions and their sources. As an argument it draws out points of contention between traditions in Australian literary criticism and recent film criticism. And as a reassessment of the stand-off between the radical metropolitan and the metaphysical secondary approaches to culture in Australia, it proposes some new connections between some old dichotomies.

Turner takes the category of narrative as the point of contention between Australian film and literary traditions. He proposes that narratives are in the business of resolving culturally specific contradictions, and that the patterns of meaning which recur in film and literature are articulations of the ideological beliefs and values which constitute Australian culture.

One of Turner's objectives is to identify the dominant ideologies offered by Australian narratives to the problems of Australian experience. He surveys a wide range of writings and films to suggest that "the consciousness of Australian experience (as being harsh but worthwhile, eluding realistic expectations of a modest level of survival rather than romantic or naive notions of conquering one's physical conditions) and the consciousness of nature of the 'Australian type' (as resourceful, tough, possessing an independence and individualism that does not preclude a sense of community and 'mateship') are encoding investments" (p143).

Turner reaches this conclusion and draws out its implications in four steps. His first step is to challenge the Romantic opposition between Society and Nature which proposes that the search for harmony with nature in Australia is doomed because of the harshness and hostility of the land. In terms of this opposition, the radical metropolitan tradition sees the land as offering the

forms of isolation but also the promise of freedom. The metaphysical secondary tradition sees the threat to sense of harmony and spiritual liberation, and the promise in terms of spiritual transcendence. Turner argues that the dichotomy itself is the problem because the choice of nature into nature pre-emptively calls for change. If the Australian landscape is one of antagonism by its very nature, then the only option is the pragmatic one of survival.

Turner takes the metaphor of imprisonment to develop the next stage of his argument that "the rigours and difficulties of the natural landscape together with the social system of conservatism provide us with the aids that we need to accept the status quo in a society where there are strong physical, social and hegemonic reasons for doing so" (p22). The identification of imprisonment or confinement as the central paradigm for the depiction of the self in Australian narrative, undermines the Australian protagonist's quest with the Australian protagonist's model of exile. If survival becomes the central goal, then meaning becomes pragmatic, based on a scepticism about social change.

Turner argues that the loosely structured, open-ended narratives of the 1970s feature film depend on the invention of history to give narrative to otherwise untraceable situations like the character's arrival in *Sunday Too Far Away*. "Our narratives take part before the feeling of alienation, without fully accepting it, they are arrested at a 'pre-existential moment' awaiting the replacement of meaning and value but without inventing a replacement for which they may accept responsibility" (p200). The dominant view of power relations between the self and Australian society proposes the futility of action against the status quo.

The third step in Turner's thesis maintains that the choice of the mode of characterisation in Australian narrative relates to a particular view of the self. The documentary realism of much film represents characters as types. They act as metaphors for some aspect of Australian life, revealing a scepticism about individualism and the uniqueness of the self. The literary conventions of narrative depends upon a representation of character which is ideologically opposed to the individual and which undermines the radical potential of the unscripted myth of independence. A commitment to certain kinds of independence makes a basic cognition of difference and individuality.

The final stage of Turner's argument takes up the conflict of mateship, individualism and the myth of individualism. For

Harvey, 'the nation' performs several functions: it provides the idea for lowering the threshold of personal expectations, it is the object of the arguments around the issue of conversion, and it provides the supporting mythology for the conversion of marriage and the representation of character. In film and fiction it is the Irish legend of the 1890s that provides the paradigm for the representation of nationalism. According to Turner, nationalist support of the Ascendancy predominant is positive, even celebratory, while the popular version of *The Silver Fox* from Disney may indicate that the nationalist myth has diminished within a film, due to subversion of the mythic story.

In the concluding chapter, Turner's hidden agenda begins to emerge. He identifies two trends in film and writing which appear to offer alternative and complementary models of Australian experience. The central focus on urban, social and political subjects in film, and the formal influence of Surrealism, metafiction and 'fabulation' in writing, suggest to Turner the progressive possibilities of realism and the fable for the production of counter-hegemonic meanings. This perspective underlines his clear disavowal of both progressive and reactionary texts in a dual journey that Turner's *subject* is clearly based upon the Australian cinema of 1990s film criticism.

Thorne pre-emptively takes account of several responses to his choice by spelling out its limitations in both the introduction and the conclusion. By taking the audience to his primary subject, he focuses on similarities rather than differences between texts. The result is a statistical model of form and meaning in Australian narrative. It tends to exclude individual texts in the applied model, producing a closed system whereby an enormous range of films and books are plundered for those domains which constitute the dominant myth of Australianness.

Although Turner takes great pains to develop his argument systematically, the connections that he finally makes between the representations of the major world religions of Australia, experience and their pragmatic conclusions, lack cogency. His claim that these meanings form a pattern that reveals the dominant ideology of the culture becomes even less convincing. There seems to be little point in producing a useful characterization of the culture — as one which is addressed by the bush legend of the 1890s, without considering the conditions for the evolution of conflicting myths. As Turner says, just because a message is sent, doesn't mean it has been received.

Turner's cultural nationalism produces a blind spot which transforms a proliferation of cultures into *the* culture, and which assumes that *Australians* necessarily hold *Australian* opinions captive by virtue of geographical boundaries. It would be impossible to dismiss Turner's invention of a national ideology as a Marxist misanthrope, but that would be to turn a blind eye in at least two big areas, the *Discourse* and *Conscience* chapters.

One place where *Nonconformist* Flannery could claim an advantage is in the groundswell of debate over Australianness, concerning its relation to the problem of Flannery and interventions into the theoretical statements of a colonization project founded on obsolescence. Turner's identification of a recurrent thematic of improvement, survival and pragmatic moves, across a whole body of film and writing, becomes more convincing when he sets the same preoccupations cropping up in theoretical positions, and in moral criteria devoted to a single film. Meghan Morris's essay on *Chocolat* (1962), opens up questions of local responses to global situations, turning out complex relations between the positive force of a "community of disparate groups," and transitory racial and sexual apathy. Turner's book enables us to see the extent to which *Chocolat* (1962) derives from and modifies ethnic stereotypes on local occasions.

and, consequently, from the question of whether metaphors of management and culture are "accidental dramatizations of the way in which a politics of survival and acceptance manages to win the assent of the culture." In Turner's study had there been no room for coming to with a total system of explanation for a culture instead with the "the fit is right, state" approach to adversity, it might have taken time to speculate on the progressive potential of the politics of survival which it knows so unexamined. The drive to touch on a broad range of books and films, and to incorporate them all into a single explanatory principle, rebuffs against the really interesting questions to do with history, forms and processes, which Turner's book leaves to do and do

Figure 1

1. Moulton Moore, "Tooth and Claw: Tales of Survival and Capable Creatures," *Sci. & Tech.* 24, June-August 1987.

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THE JOURNAL OF THE INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF AGRICULTURAL ECONOMISTS

"The Big Easy" has to be one of the best and sexiest romantic cop thrillers to hit a movie screen in years.



DENNIS QUAID
"Inner Space"
ELLEN BARKIN NED BEATTY
"Forsythe Maerzies" "Newsworld"

THE 2010 "BEST" RESEARCHER AWARD is an honor that recognizes the contributions of individuals in the field of research. The award is presented annually to the researcher who has made the most significant contribution to the field of research in the past year.

1. *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 2000; 284: 2689-2695.



CLOSE-UP

Jim McBride Tells It Like It Is

IF YOU DIDN'T get hooked on *The Big Easy* during its theatrical release last year, you'd be crazy not to catch it on video. Harking back to the most passionate screen romances, this latest film from the director of *Breathless*, Jim McBride, would give anyone palpitations. You'll see it once and want to be seduced by Eliott Barkin, Dennis Quaid and the ambience of New Orleans over and over. The dialogue is delicious and the extraordinary rapport between Barkin and Quaid is heightened by sensual Capus tunes that sweep you through moods of longing and lament, carnival and celebration.

If it all sounds too good, there are more than a few dedicated McBride followers to back it up: those who know the work of this once "underground" American director from the days of David Holzman's *Easy* when he first collaborated with L.M. Kit Carson. Made for \$200 in 1967, David Holzman's *Easy* (also as its premise) Quaid's line "Crime is truth 24 frames a second" and records the mixed-up daily life of its central character in all its banality. The initial image for the film was of "a guy with a camera on his shoulder filming himself in a mirror" and it continues to mark a significant moment in the debate about the line between documentary and fiction.

Eleven years later, McBride and Carson conceived the opening shot for *Breathless*: "a rockabilly punk jump around in front of a Vegas casino at sunrise." Set in contemporary LA, it was inspired by *A Bout De Souffle* (1960) and was their "resistance payback" to Godard. Starring Richard Gere (who gives a nervously energetic, mesmerizing performance as hustler Jesse Lupack) and Valerie Kaprisky (an 18-year-old unknown, spotted in a group photo from a French magazine), *Breathless* was a stylish entry into Hollywood, recognized by the critics but not the box office.

Before his feature, McBride worked sporadically, editing, writing screenplays, revising screenplays (Sam Fuller's *The Big Red One*), directing ads, modeling. And there were other films: *My Girlfriend's Wedding* (1968), *Sam And Hanks* (1971), *Plagues For Life's Other Sides* (1971) and *Mr. Times* (1974), a porno movie which was picked up by distributors with more eagerness than the previous three films. "All my friends in

Italy and France and Germany have seen it," said McBride, "whereas my other films are almost impossible to see."

But then there is *The Big Easy*. New Orleans, where we learn that takes have a certain way of doing things, is the backdrop for this romance/thriller. Dennis Quaid plays the shamelessly brash police lieutenant, Remy McSwain. He's from a long line of cops and broods through his job. McSwain's on the make. When assistant district attorney Anne Osborne (Eliott Barkin) arrives to investigate alleged police corruption, the tables are slowly turned. She's from the outside. And there's the magic: the process of these two negotiating for love draws you in, spins you around, and leaves you sighing for more. More of Quaid's cooing and teasing, his beguiling yet innocent play, more of Barkin's contradictory signs — her prima response, her vulnerability, her courage to show desire, shame, embarrassment.

The Big Easy is about the difficulties, the exasperation, and the tears engendered by love. But there is the other side, other moods: it gives you grins, glances, giggling, and boy "getters" that are intent to make up for the hardships. Amidst films that make love look as easy, McBride is not afraid to "tell it like it is."

On top of this, the supporting actors add the spark and vitality that helps to shift the murder plot into the background. Each is given the chance to develop a quirky attribute, a way of injecting interest beyond their immediate function in the narrative. Lisa Jons Parisky, the smart and sassy Detective McBride, delivers some of the best "wink guy" lines, the late Charles Ludlum as the eccentric defense attorney, Lamar, amuses with every roll of the eye, and Ned Beatty is perfect as the classic Southern cop looking for a winner. In their own way, they have the tables turned on them too.

McBride considers himself a collaborator, for him it's all about pointing people in the right direction. "I'm not the kind who imposes his absolute vision," he has said, "I give them a general area of those, tone — an attitude." In *The Big Easy*, he certainly got it right. In this interview, he explains how.

**Ruffalo Caputo and
Kathy Dal**

It's been three years since *Breathless* and as a reviewer* put it, it's always a long time between drinks for you. What's happened in that period? Are there any new projects we don't know about and can you tell us about any?

Sure, there are others.... That's kind of the way life is here. You try to have four or five different things going and hope that one of them will happen. But if you're talking specifically about the period between *Breathless* and *The Big Easy* — I'm trying to remember, it was so long ago — I did a screenplay called *The Challenger* with Kit Carson, who wrote *Breathless* with me, and it was based on a screenplay by another guy, an English guy whose name I don't recall at the moment.... How much do you want to know about any of these things?

Whatever you can tell us. You have something of a following here, a critical following.

I do! You're kidding. How funny. That's very nice.

It seems the state of affairs in Hollywood is very difficult.

For you, I guess that's for commercial reasons. Although your films are released commercially — *Breathless* and *The Big Easy* — just the same, they seem to be at odds with, or unacceptable to, the mainstream. For instance, *Breathless* and, I suspect, *The Big Easy*, took some time before reaching a commercial release. Why is that?

Breathless wasn't a movie that was well-loved in Hollywood. In fact, it was about three years before I got a chance to make another movie. *The Big Easy* was the first project that anyone ever offered me, to be a director-for-hire, so to speak. I was very anxious to work and very grateful for the chance even though the original screenplay wasn't something that I felt really strongly about. It was very different from the way the movie ended up. It took a year between the time *The Big Easy* was finished and the time it actually got released commercially here. I can't really explain it. The producer showed it to all the major distributors and they all kind of responded the same way and said, "It's a nice little movie but I don't know how to sell it."

The producer was very unhappy and thought we had a disaster. He kept wanting us to shoot a new ending and try to



THIS IS THE BIG EASY, DARLIN'—Jean Reno and Daphne Good

find ways of making it more "appealing" but we couldn't figure out what the problem with it was. But it wasn't like "this hate this movie . . . If you just change this scene!" then suddenly it would be all right. It was just that with this kind of indifference. We didn't have any big stars, a big commercial hook or anything and in fact the professor was going to try and distribute it himself. It was terribly depressing because it was going to open in a couple of cities in the South and we were sure it was just going to disappear.

Then, that January, about a year ago, there's a film festival in Park City, Utah, that's run by Robert Redford's Sundance Institute, and we took the movie up there and David Puttnam saw it (this is when he was head of Columbia) and he liked it and bought it and released it — it turned out to be quite successful! Before that, it was a disaster, after, it was a success, who can explain it?

In the interview you did with Joseph Bessie (*The Film Director As Superstar*, Penguin, 1974) you mention reading *Cahiers du Cinéma* and through it becoming reacquainted with American movies. People like Howard Hawks, Michael Ray or Anthony Mann were discovered by a

foreign culture, the French in this case, and because of it they were "returned home". Do you feel that has been the way with your own films? At least it seems to be the case with David Holzman's *Easy*.

I think that's very much because I was coming from a generation of young American filmmakers who discovered American movies through the French. It's like the French discovering Shakespeare through Oregon Wallace!

But that whole idea of being discovered by a foreign culture and then returning home, for me that seems to be built into your films. Nonetheless, in particular, because it is a remake of a French film which remakes the American gangster movie, I'm not so sure about *The Big Easy*. Maybe in a more general sense the film appears to be foreign to its own culture.

The Big Easy certainly looks to be exotic here. I think that is a lot of its appeal ultimately. Having discovered movies through a kind of intellectual prism — the nouvelle vague and the American underground — my first interest was in "art" movies, let's say, and I wouldn't until after I'd heard about the

French New Wave and Antonioni, Fellini, Bergman, Eisenstein, not to mention a whole background in documentary films, cinema verité, and the American underground, it wasn't until I absorbed all of that stuff that I got to classic American movie-making. So I went backwards. I guess by the same token, my career has followed that peculiar track, in the sense that I started out making very specialized art movies and in recent years have tried to find a more mainstream voice to speak with.

Let's move on to a particular element in your films — the music. In both *Breathless* and *The Big Easy* the selection of music is singularly appropriate to the narrative development. For instance, in *Breathless* the selection of songs reflects the character's psychological state. It also fits in with a notion of popular culture which pervades *Breathless* — cars, casinos, clothes, certain movies and, of course, the music — and in a sense they are all throwaway elements.

Did you say throwaway elements? I don't throw them away! No, I mean they're poppies.

But they're classic too. I think the music is classic, the books, the cars. I'm trying to find a way now to make distinctions between high and low art, so to speak. I think that ultimately when you step back from all that stuff certain things remain, certain classical values pervade popular culture and high culture and they're not so far apart.

But the way the music functions in *The Big Easy* is different from *Breathless* in that it is pertinent to the region, New Orleans, culturally and historically.

Maybe the difference is this: in *Breathless* we created an imaginary, semi-fantasy kind of cultural context that the characters live in — the fantasy of Los Angeles, the fantasy of a life of rock'n'roll. But in *The Big Easy* I was still basically trying to put the story in a real world. In the case of *The Big Easy*, that was southern Louisiana and in *Breathless* it was an imaginary LA. However, in a sense, *The Big Easy* is just as much an imaginary New Orleans. For example, there aren't any Cajuns in New Orleans, Cajuns are generally country people. So we created an imaginary world where two different kinds of music co-existed but it's not really true.

That's why you don't really represent New Orleans, or you represent it differently. We don't see a great deal of New Orleans. There are a couple of landmarks — "Tipitina's" and "Antone's" — but New Orleans is invoked as a state of mind or a mood.

Exactly. It really is like that to a certain extent. We took all of our lust for the reality but it was a heightened and selective reality that we ultimately showed.

What kind of input do you, personally, have in the music of the films? You seem to give it a great deal of thought.

Yeah. Music is one of my great preoccupations in life. I think there is a great deal that movies and music have in common, abstract qualities. When you can find a way to fuse them or, many times, you can create something very rich.

You also seem to avoid the popular approach which sees soundtracks constructed from pop songs for the sole purpose of what appears to be commercial gain.

That's true. We had a really hard time trying to find someone to put out the soundtrack of *The Big Easy*. I think they expected to sell about 20,000 in the first order and they sold 100,000 in two weeks. Amazingly, it's been selling very well. It didn't come out until several weeks after the film in the States. We felt bad about that but it's doing well. People seem to like it a lot. But the idea of constructing a soundtrack that

has surface commercial appeal . . . that doesn't interest me that much. I think the music that I like generally has some kind of commercial appeal? I try to do things that people will like. I don't deliberately try to be obscure. There's a whole range of music beyond the Top 40 that I think people love to hear but they don't get a chance very often. I never felt any conflict about the music we were using or any pressure from somebody else to use more commercial music.

That scene where Ring turns around to Anna and sings that song really surprised me. It felt odd that this character should sing — it seems to be an aside to the film. But at the same time, it is very appropriate because he is attempting to hide himself once again. It gives the scene a double edge. It doesn't seem as though it was scripted.

It wasn't in the original screenplay. The original screenplay was set in Chicago and I worked with a writer-collaborator Jack Benin. We moved it to New Orleans and introduced the musical context of it very deliberately.

I remember reading that for *Breathless* there was initially a problem with Richard Gere coming to terms with his character but finally it happens. It seems to indicate that you work intensively with your actors. Was that the case with *The Big Easy*?

That story about Richard is true but it happened way before we actually started making the movie. That was the process I had to go through with him in order to convince him to work with me on the movie. He had been working with another director who had a very different idea of what the character should be like. (McBride and Carson wrote the script for *Breathless* although two directors began working on it before Oren appeared McBride director.) At the beginning, Richard found it difficult to see it in a new and different way. It was mainly through showing him pictures of Jerry Lee Lewis that I got him around to the idea of what the character meant to me. More than anything, it's an attitude and it took a while for us to connect about that. Once we did, then he was totally with it and extremely inventive within that approach.

My experience working with the actors on *The Big Easy* was the best experience I've ever had with actors in my life, and I don't have a whole lot of experience with actors. I find the idea of working with actors very challenging. I used to find it very scary. But in this movie we had an ensemble of wonderful actors. We also had the odd situation where we had a song which was in a constant process of change. The whole time we were re-writing the script to make it act in New Orleans, and making all the other kinds of changes, we were in pre-production for the movie. We had to start on a certain date. In fact, the re-writing kept going on all through the making of the movie. I took the position that we had to bring the actors into the creative process and so I invited them to participate and make suggestions and we would try to incorporate to improve.

In *The Big Easy* there seems to be something similar to the incident with Gere where you showed him pictures of Jerry Lee Lewis. I read that you showed the cast *Rita Girl Friday* in order to cut corners on the script.

That's right but not so much to cut corners. On a pragmatic level, we had a very long script and I didn't want it to be a long, slow movie so by showing them *Rita Girl Friday* I wanted to infuse them with that kind of spirit. We had a game where we were always competing to make it faster and funnier. It worked out great because all the actors really got into it.

Very much beyond that, Dennis, I think, stood out more than anybody else, throwing himself into the role and the whole atmosphere of the city. He was tremendously inventive

and came up with some wonderful stuff. I have to credit him as a collaborator on the screenplay in a way.

There's been the implication that because the Dennis Quaid character, Remy, is so smooth and charming, and is so good at what he does, and Annie is so vulnerable, that the sexual politics of the film are suspect or questionable. I tend to read it the other way round because I find Remy an incredibly innocent and naive figure. For instance, when his brother reveals to him that he knows his father was on the take, Remy is blind to all that. Would you agree with that?

I much prefer your interpretation.

It also relates to all that stuff about family and to his job because he sees the police department as family as well. More important, he doesn't have the knowledge Annie has, she is less innocent than he is because of what she knows.

That's an interesting thought. On one level, I could say to you very pragmatically we were stuck with this story about this basically arrogant and oblivious guy who did a lot of bad things and somehow realized they were bad at the end and became a good guy. That was a very awkward position to be in and one of the big struggles in making the film was to find the proper tone for him and the proper way to be able to love him and still be able to judge him. It was a delicate process, feeling our way through that. Dennis was a tremendous help in that way.

But you're right, we wanted to give that sense, and it's quite true, it's very much the way it is done there in New Orleans. ... I lived in Brazil for a year where everything is done under the table and sideways, never through official channels. It's kind of the same in New Orleans. That's a way of doing things which is not necessarily right or wrong and if you grow up with that it's possible to ignore the moral implications of what you do. That's the way we tried to see Remy. I takes somebody from outside and a series of events for him to see his life in a moral context. That's the idea and if we follow your interpretation it works.

It's very similar to the Italian cultural experience.

That's funny because the character originally was Italian.

Are there any new projects in the works and can we expect to see them soon?

Yes. This is the most amazing thing about my life because I've basically been someone who's a long time between movies — or drinks — and suddenly I'm having pictures offered to me. I got a lot of intention after *The Big Day*. I'm actually involved in three different projects all of which I think are really exciting and all of which I think will essentially get made. One of them is called *Dieter Aschauer* and it's based on a comic book by Frank Miller. It's quite brilliant and wonderful. I collaborated on the screenplay with Kit Carson. The next one is based on the autobiography of Chuck Barris who was a very famous game show host [*The Gong Show*]. This is a very funny autobiography, a mixture of reality and fantasy that's quite extraordinary. Jack Bauer and I have just finished that screenplay. I work sometimes with Kit and sometimes with Jack. They're both long-standing collaborators. I enjoy working with both of them.

The most current thing is a project about Jerry Lee Lewis which Dennis Quaid is going to star in. We're doing it for Orion and we're just about to start writing the screenplay. We're supposed to shoot it this summer. They're the three things I'm involved in now. I'm excited about all of this — I'd be happy to do any and everyone.

The Big Day is a Simon Kay release.

OVERVIEW

Shock is the name and slick is the game. PAUL KALINA looks at the philosophy behind the slick, the cover on a video that makes it stand out in a crowd.

A HOLOGRAM of a skull inside a Winston set beckons viewers to *The Video Dead*. Another video shows a woman bashed in silver blue lips, while yet another carries the line "She makes money between her legs ... and sports it up her arms." To paraphrase the cover line that accompanies the hologram, look what's living inside your video shop.

"The video cover is one of the most important aspects to consider in the successful marketing of videos," says Martin Andrian of RCA-Columbia Pictures-Hoyle Video. "From trade to consumer, the video cover must have impact with capital T, so it is the first image that a video dealer or renter is faced with when they are buying or hiring a video." When distribution companies representatives sell dealers new releases, their wares are displayed on the covers. Roadshow's marketing supremo Mark Patterson says he can sell 1000 empty boxes on the basis of the cover.

It's a matter of eliciting renters who might not know anything about a film with a wrapper measuring in there 22 by 32 centimeters, only half of which is visible while it stands on the shelf. "The major concern," says Steve Spaul of Premiera Roma Entertainment, "is how it will appear on the shelf next to another."

"Slicks," as they are called in the trade, have got the video industry covered. The word perfectly conjures the ingenuity that goes into the sleeves which differentiate the contents of one plastic box from another.

Sam! has overseen the production of what he claims is "the world's best musical box" for Robo's Christmas



Like musical greeting cards, the video slick plays a tune when opened. For *Death Before Dishonor*, he initiated a holographic image that gives the effect of motion. The three-dimensional hologram of a skull inside a television set on the cover of *The Video Dead* prompted congratulatory letters from producer and director Robert Scott.

As for novel designs, the slick of *The Wrath* is one of, if not the most, daring yet. The three-dimensional image of an armor-clad figure bashed in helixes of shimmering, reflective beams was achieved by printing onto different grades of foil. It was produced overseas as the facility is not available locally. And with sales of more than 10,000, *The Wrath* has become the largest selling video release of an independent company — though Palace's Marilyn Gates insists that this be seen as the central content of an extensive marketing campaign.

At the other extreme are theatrical successes as well as movies like *Crocodile Dundee* and *E.T.* (the latter not yet available on video).



which would probably sell out of brown paper bags. Says Marine Anderson, "Usually, however, if a film has experienced strong theatrical success, one does not suggest major changes to video cover artwork that marries the artwork used in its theatrical campaign."

Contractual and corporate obligations largely determine how distributors market videos in Australia. As an international corporation, RCA-Columbia-Hoyts, which derives product from companies like Columbia Pictures, Orion, Cannon and Hoyts, has predetermined contractual obligations. These obligations include a "blueprint" on what is possible or not in the marketing field and are determined by the film studios who own the copyright of the film. Changes involve tampering with a copyrighted product and this is where difficulties arise.

Until as recently as December 1988, the local distribution arm of Walt Disney Studios had its hands tied by the parent company in Burbank, and were not allowed to make changes to the marketing material it was supplied. At present, the local distributor of Touchstone and Disney product has a fair amount of input in making changes to slick designs, although approval must always be sought. When Lucy Hucan felt that the slick of *The Alien* failed to mention comedy, her only recourse was to include cover lines taken from reviews that highlighted that aspect of Barry Levinson's film. On the other hand, she was permitted to alter *Tough Guys* to suit the

local market. Approval was also granted on *Excess Girls To Camp*, to play down the presence of Jim Varney, whose popularity in America is not matched locally.

In what must be one of the most hectic contacts in movie history, the slick of *Outrageous Fortune* had to position Bette Midler to one side of Shelley Long. When CEL released *Labyrinth* it was bound to use Bill Henson's design of a girl jumping through the labyrinth, even though it was felt that its orientation toward children detracted from the male adult appeal of its star actor David Bowie. According to Maria Benedetti at CEL, a male "maternal" sell emphasizing David Bowie, who was touring Australia at the time, would have been preferable. Woody Allen's tight-lipped contracts include controls over artwork used in marketing campaigns and appeal to international video releases. Marine Anderson, who has overseen the release of *Hannah And Her Sisters* and *Radio Days*, believes that "his inflexibility on not being able to change 'my' artwork does not render success stories for Allen's pictures when they become videos because the 'look' that works for millions such as America and Europe may be totally unsuitable for Australia."

Proof of the power of a slick, and the need to shape campaigns for the local market, occurred when the first three films of Karl Lerner Touchstones were released in Australia. Following consultations with the parent over the suitable designs, the slick of *Blood And Guts*

was rewritten, resulting in sales that exceeded expectations by several hundred.

With the large number of video releases where distributors are not bound to producers, the slick (and subsequent sell) will depend primarily on the distributor's marketing flair and the materials available. Inevitably there will be an "overuse" sell to fall back on, but says Soerri, "If it doesn't look like it will work, it will be redesigned."

Producers certainly covered all the bases when it produced a double-sided slick for Geoff Murphy's *Utu*. The "smart marketing concept", as Soerri puts it, pitched the film to two different types of viewer. One side depicts a "very action adventure sell", the other an "arty type sell" (The latter utilized three superimposed transparencies to depict a tribesman (whose hair blended into the branches of a tree and sky in the background.) And, says Soerri, "Let's face it, Double Bay is a different area to Parnassus." He says that dealers were recommended to turn the cover around as soon as demand dropped.

Mike Peterson suggests that the ingredients of a good slick are that it "look like a movie, not a magazine or book", that it contains a single point of reference; that it be bright and contain key elements of the film. Colour, says Marine Anderson, plays an enormous part in the visual appeal of a video cover.

Ideally, the image used on a slick will be strong enough to



attract attention — the hook, one might say — while also capturing the essence of the film. For instance, the slick of Alan Rudolph's *Trouble In Mind* contains superimposed images of its star Kris Kristofferson and a city skyline (culled from a photo library) with a cover line drawn from the film's dialogue. The challenge, says Maria Benedetti, was to elicit the film's distinctive mood without making it look too much like an "art film", which in the video trade is the seal of death.

In the case instance of when material is designed before seeing the film, Benedetti maintains that "a sell" for the film can usually be extracted from *Video Reviews*, *clippings*, *festival and market reports*. Where no suitable material has been supplied, *illustrations*, *studio shots* and the *resources of photographic libraries* are used. According to video industry veteran Alan Tibbitts, in the past many "R-rated sex films" came from the US in cardboard packaging which could not be used locally. Covers were subsequently made from photographs of models who had no association whatsoever with the film itself.

Sometimes these studio shots can be comically inappropriate. The 1982 David Puttnam-produced *Secrets* (part of the *First Love* series), featured on its cover a shot of a girl on a bed in stockings and suspenders. For a "PG" rated film described as a "delightful comedy of adolescent adolescence", the image is hardly an accurate representation. Tibbitts explains that his "thought it



would depict the "most provocative aspect" of the film.

But by their very nature, advertising looks depend on exaggeration. The analogy cover line on *Days in Space* — "The film they tried to ban!" — is hardly accurate. The controversy raged over whether it should be given an "R" or an "M" certificate.

Cover lines, says Scent, ought to be "short, sharp advertising copy that gets straight to the point. The front cover catch should have the least number of words to describe the film in the best possible light." The cover of *I Got On Four Green Roads* "This woman has just cut, chopped, broken and buried five men beyond recognition — but no jury in America would ever convict her."

Patterson admits that the cover line of *Harlow's O* — "She makes money between her legs... and spends it up her ass!" — had a fine line. In order to highlight the film's extreme elements (savage drug abuse and prostitution), it was a matter of either "underachieving the sell," not offending the public. Scent defends criticism of the cover of *Girl School Science* — heads chopped by meat axes — by claiming that it's an accurate representation of the film, and that it can't possibly mislead potential viewers.

The notion of not misleading the customer was recently turned into a particularly calculating and shrewd marketing ploy. Like *Mondo Cane* and the new *Shocking Ass* films, *Sweet And Savage* is a brutally realistic, no-holds-barred shockumentary. The cover carries a letter "warning" the viewer of the grueling footage contained in the film. It's a ploy that can be seen as socially responsible, but it is also a challenge and a lure.

Recently, it has been suggested that video covers carry a warning, especially where the film contains scenes considered to be violent. By drawing attention to the fact, such a warning could become a marketing ploy to sensationalize such material. And besides, what impact could official wording have, compared to the blinding force of those slick?



Straight To Hell

ON VIEW

Apart from the obvious blockbusters like *The Fly* and *Peggy Sue Got Married*, what's new in the video store? PAUL KALINA and RAFFAELE CAPUTO look at pesto Westerns, occult thrillers and Hansel and Gretel inversions.

IT IS not clear what to make of Alex Cox's claim that *Straight To Hell* (Polisar) was intended as "a light-hearted riff on *Walter*". At best, it might suggest that his most recent film will right the wrongs of the earlier one. On the other hand, despite the tongue-in-cheek line credit promising a sequel called *Back To Hell*, the possibilities seem strikingly limited.

Straight To Hell is not so much a spaghetti Western as a parody of one. Here the down-and-out beret-wearers and wisps are played by cool rock stars, including Jon Strummer, Cole Maud, Cui O'Riordan and Dave Corallo, as well as Jim Jarmusch and the ubiquitous Dennis Hopper. Many of them were also cast in *Walter*. Throughout, they project the image that is de-sigour for rock stars — cool, detached, nonchalant.

At the same time, Cox clearly intends *Straight To Hell* to be more than a spaghetti Western, treating the genre with a fair dose of spookily irreverence. The loosely knit

narrative, concerning a pack of itinerant robbers who stumble into a remote town, is punctuated with scuffles, acts and anachronisms, like a woman who wears an airbrush outfit beneath her dusty trenchcoat.

DIRECTED by Kevin Arthur (*The Paper Of History* book, *Moby Gaps*, *Return To Eden*), Larry Brown (Rushmore) has had a brief theatrical run before its video debut. But it seems we are not going to see the film that Arthur originally intended to make about the "psychological rape" of a woman who is so scorned that she leaves the town where she lives. Arthur has distanced himself from the film, which took eight years and many studios to get made. Arthur reportedly told the producers, who wanted to see violence in the film, "I'm trying to make a film about psychological violence, not physical violence."

"They thought it was too tough," she told *American Film* recently. "So they tore

every shred of it apart, reconstituted it back into daises, and made their movie."

DEBUTING on video, and also accompanied by a drawn-out production history is *Street Smart* (RCA-Columbia Pictures-Hoyle Video). David Freeman based his screenplay on his time as a journalist at New York magazine, when, he confesses, he made up stories. "I cooked up a lot of colourful feature stories about odd people in New York: muggers, bag ladies (now called 'the homeless'), and various showbiz hangers-on," he admitted.

One of those Hollywood "properties" that has been around since 1979, it was finally taken on and filmed last year by Cosmos. For the Cosmos boys, *Street Smart* was the only way to get Christopher Reeve to make *Superman II*: if they let him do it, he would agree to play the man of steel one more time. Jerry Saltzberg (Photo in Meade Park, The Sandcastle Of Joe Tyree) was signed on as director.

Freeman's screenplay is a fanciful but still credible exploration of what happens when a journalist fabricates a story. By chance, the concocted story about a prep school re-entrance camp who is on trial for a murder for which there is no conclusive evidence. The prep's lawyer decides to subpoena the journalist's notes, knowing that they cannot be produced, and predicting that the ensuing confusion will benefit his client.

4 This tactic could even force a constitutional crisis if the courts decide by the First Amendment and refuses to contest he made the story up. It's the son of issue that Geoffrey Robertson would put to the panel of a Hypothetical. Or, according to Freeman, "It's a hard tough movie about a racist who tries to take the law and gets in over his head." But *Street Smart* does not always follow its premises to their logical ends. Instead, it focuses on the wiles of a thoroughly despicable journalist who finds himself turned on by the sexy life of the underworld. Though his motivation is never clear, it's evident from the very start that ambition has made a monster of him when he puts his lover in jeopardy by using her as bait for a pimp on whom he hopes to write a story.

To this guy, sleaze and crime make great human interest stories — *Street Smart* is also the name of a TV show on which he presents "cute" reversed-karma about graffiti artists who have taken to the spraycan instead of the knife. They also fail his every test, until "real" events over which he has no control threaten the safety of his cushioned middle-class standards.

Despite several gaping plot holes and a tendency to romanticize the very notions that the film otherwise strives to subvert, *Street Smart* avoids the sickening yet amazing allure of power and its counterpart, corruption. Schindler's depiction of the New York low life is grim and compelling, while Morgan Freeman's performance as a vile and violent pimp is hauntingly memorable.

AFTER a brief outing in cinemas late last year, *The Believers* (MCA-Columbia Pictures-Hoyle Video), John Schlesinger's occasionally boring, occasionally effective supernatural thriller, has made a hefty segue to video.

Arriving in the city after an "accident" claims the life of his wife, a psychologist (Martin Sheen) finds that rational positivist thinking won't account for some of the more freakish aspects of life in New York.

Initially, at least, *The Believers* is reminiscent of the work of Larry Cohen, whose lurking evil is never glimpsed, but constantly suggested. Here, there are brutal, gory murders, a "virus" that eats away the mind and body, and a social order pervaded by depravity. Then the film starts to link the supernatural to ancient tribal practices, and trends a familiar path of hokey spooky voodoo music.

THE CBS-FOX Marilyn Monroe collection will be available for rental and purchase. There are eight films in the package: *How To Succeed In Business, Really*, *The Seven Year Itch*, *Something's Got to Give*, *Let's Make Love* and *River Of No Return*. The last four titles were previously unavailable on video. At much the same time, Warner will release her last film, *The Mirror*.

P.K.

THERE are a couple of impressive names attached to *Demon 2* (Pulse) — Dave Argento as producer and Lamberto Bava (son of Mario Bava) as director. These names have been at the vanguard of some of the most

legendary nightmare visions in the Italian horror trade.

Argento, since the late slides with films like *Deep Red*, *Suspense* and *Inferno*, Bava with his debut film, *Maschere*. Unfortunately, *Demon 2*, like its predecessor, fails to impress. The film's starting point is a familiar vespene prologue which tells of the centuries-old predation that came true in the theatre of Demos, providing an excuse to repeat sets of situations from the first movie.

Like *Demon*, a film-within-a-film device gets the ball rolling. But unlike the original, the device is so confused that it cannot effectively match events in real with events in the other.

Demon 2 is highly derivative in its effects, borrowing the effect of a demon pushing himself through a TV set from *A Nightmare On Elm Street* and a creature from *Gremlins*. It is unfortunate that Argento and Bava, who have in the past spearheaded some original effects, have settled for borrowing all too quickly from other sources.

COLLE (Freeman) owes no able debt to H.P. Lovecraft, but it nonetheless retains the tongue-in-cheek spirit of the

earlier *Re-Animator* and *From Beyond*, both inspired by Lovecraft. In this case, the successful blend of humor and horror in the exploration would should be credited to the stable and craft combination that works under the auspices of Charles Bead's Empire Pictures — producer Brian Yarns and director Stuart Gordon. Cole takes further inspiration from Grimm's fairy tales, in particular *Hecate And Gretel*.

The film involves an elderly couple, the Herbwicks, who appear to be dollmakers, but are actually witches. Their peculiar profession can offer comfort and, for the young or young at heart, the prospect of living out their imaginary world — it's *Hansel And Gretel* in reverse.

But if you have the wrong attitude towards childhood, your life is not as pleasant. Judy, the *Gretel* of the piece, imagines her decreed Teddy transformed into a vengeful, ferocious grizzly that tears away at her father and stepmother.

Cole is not as gory as *Re-Animator* or *From Beyond*, but it's still as chilling. For this, it probably owes a good deal to the lusted dolls who rip Jane Fonda's flesh in *Barbarella*.

R.D.



The Believers



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You should have been h

How long does it take to film the world's largest flower opening? What do you do when you miss an all-important rainforest copulation sequence? FRED HARDEN investigates the trials and technical solutions of Australia's foremost nature cinematographer.

It's a sign I'm sure you've noticed of the growing visual-aesthetic sophistication of the television audience that in natural history documentaries we no longer accept the human observer's-eye-view of things. We expect a certain standard of camera placement, movements and technical quality. Similarly there is no tolerance for the difficulty in showing the mating habits of the Lesser Noddy by covering with a few words of commentary. Show us and surprise us, we cry.

Among the many examples of film techniques that I enjoy showing to advertising creative people is the work of Oxford Scientific Films, famous for documentary natural history techniques that could be applied to TV commercial and feature production. It's an interest that is shared by a lot of special effects companies. They hold innovators like Oxford Scientific up as the best example of technical application used to expand the boundaries of what is possible to show on screen.

Film can compress or expand time, discover things our eyes could never see alone, make patterns of behaviour meaningful (or discover things we cannot understand). It finds applications nowhere greater than in programs such as David Attenborough's BBC series, *Life On Earth* and the forthcoming *Trials Of Life*, which set incredible standards for the filmmakers to show things never seen on screen before.

Like the previous series, the new programs will have an Australian name on the credits, that of *Mente Wildlife Films*, behind which are the talents of photographer and

journalist Denney Clyne and cinematographer Jim Fraser. I have grown of the work of Fraser for some time, he is a friend of Peter Purvis from Oxford Scientific who has visited and inspired here, and Andrew Mason from *Mirage*. Effects speaks highly of him.

I have been trying to catch him between travels for some time and the following is only a frustratingly brief look at his ideas and work. The conversation was so packed with examples from each of his productions as his workshop studio was with unique equipment.

Fraser has been associated with biology all his life. His father had large collections of butterflies and beetles and Fraser's earliest memories are of being out in the bush with him. He was also aware that his father's interests had labelled him at the time as "academic". Yet he is grateful and has never regretted this built-in interest in natural history, believing that what goes with it is a sixth sense for animal and insect behaviour that has allowed him to become as successful as he is at his work. He has gathered over the years that "even good cameramen who attempt wildlife cinematography don't really make it without the interest in natural history first."

In addition to his childhood interests, the first job as a technician in the zoology department of the University of New England gave him a grounding in chemistry, physics, and continued his knowledge of natural history — knowledge that he calls on today. Leaving university, he established his own business, in partnership with university friends, in biological supplies

for schools. With the offer of a job at the Australian Museum as the Chief Preparator of Exhibitions, he moved to Sydney. It was during the seven years at the Museum that he developed an interest in photography that had been awakened by his new partner, Denney Clyne. He looked towards cinematography with the advantage of the technical background but, practically, was approaching it blind, learning from magazines and books, not realising that he had chosen to start with the most difficult area — micro and macro. He remembers the bewilderment, wondering "why I couldn't do as simple a thing as a pin, and why your heartbeat would invariably shake a steady beam in high magnification."

BEGINNER'S LUCK

Having lived in the country all his life, he found the move to the city was hard. Clyne had helped him settle in and while visiting her one day, he was introduced to Vincent Serenity and Bob Raymond, who were doing *Shells Australia*, a pioneering Australian TV documentary series which influenced the work of a lot of people at the time.

Vincent Serenity had been trying to talk Clyne into shooting on movie, some of the beautiful events she had taken. There was an opportunity in the series for some insect and spider footage and Serenity and Raymond didn't want to tackle it. They asked Clyne but she wasn't keen because the equipment was too heavy and she wanted to stick to stills. "I was cheery and said why don't we have a go together," Fraser said.

ere last week ...

"Recent lent us his old windup Bolex, and the first thing we shot was a spider called Pinops, the ice-creeping spider. The first footage was terrific and I thought, 'Hey this is easy.' But it was beginner's luck. Every bit of footage after that was over- or underexposed, had hairline down them, or spots or blotches. Nothing went right for a long time, each time the videotape came back we would literally break out in tears. Bob Raymond was very good about it. He kept giving us film and said, 'Just persevere', and 'I'm ever grateful for that'."

Applying his training, he then started to analyze the results technically and diagnose the problems with what was primitive equipment.

He developed his own technique, like the use of a rubber band around the pen handle and zoom to smooth out the heartbeat. Finding that he couldn't use the stock items that normal camera operators applied to their work, he adapted and tinkered for each application. He continues to do this because, he explains, "I still can't buy the things I need off the shelf. This means building and modifying which I know from experience was too expensive to have done outside." He now has a workshop well equipped with small letters, and drill presses etc.

From those early days it has been so much an evolution of equipment as of photographic style for Fraser.

BUILDING EQUIPMENT, AND A REPUTATION

This has involved using standard equipment but altering it in some fashion. One example of this is his technique in gaining diatoms straight on the surface of the lens.

He did this when, he explained, "I was looking for

magnifications of a butterfly egg that were greater than people had said were possible, and would still give a good image. I was told that I should use bellows instead of diaphragms and I tried and tried. I remember engineering the exposure stop adjustments on the bellows. But you really need to just start shooting with our kind of subjects and these diatoms took too much time. You haven't got time to take your eye off the eye-piece to make those adjustments.

"The main thing that I've collaborated on with my gear is that if I see something, the camera is always loaded, and I can be filming in 10 seconds flat. That's correct exposure and focused, and with width, you have to be that speedy."

The evolution of Fraser's equipment has culminated in a sophisticated motorised optical bench for doing very precise movements at high magnifications. Built on a small lathe bed, it is controlled by heavily geared motors and micrometer adjustments. Fraser says "It was built first for Life On Earth, and it has paid for itself many times over." With a laugh, he says it is portable, "in that it breaks down into six suitcase! After sitting it around for a few years I've built a single-case version that looks like a large microscope, which I now use for field work." When he is filming on the run it can be set up on the barrel of the car and all the motors work from the camera batteries.

NEW SUBJECTS, NEW TECHNIQUES

Each new subject seems to call for new techniques. For Akenborough they produced a lot of sequences that at the time were very innovative and are today remarkable only because they were the first. Such is the speed with which we move from being wide-



DAVID FRASER

eyed, to a critical audience.

"We shot things like the water-holding frogs," Fraser explained, "which we had to devise for the first time ways of getting underground to show how these frogs evolved nine-year droughts. It also involved David Akenborough squeezing one of the frogs and getting water out and drinking it. At that time I was also experimenting with improving tracking shots with the subjects. For the trilobed lizard on Life On Earth I only managed to run behind the animal chasing it and it was still pretty good film. I've since learnt enough about the animal that I can film it from any angle. I did a big sequence for National Geographic and when it was shown in Japan I think it must have been the thing that sparked the craze. They used that sequence as advertising in their promotion across the States."

While it's obviously impossible to take a Louren crane onto their locations, it is just that flexibility that is required. Fraser has built a very portable lightweight



a crane, he says: "But his together in five minutes. It sits on the tripod but it's a boom arm with a difference. It performs like a miniature Luma and it has an extraordinary movement that the Luma doesn't. There are extra movements that are possible at the camera head and built-in automatic corrections to overcome the wobble as you'd get when doing forward swings with it, by panning the camera head."

"I use the crane a lot to go from one subject to another when doing linking or bridging shots. You can track small endoscope lenses along the ground following small animals through foliage, you can go from above ground to underground. There's a shot of a green iguana in *Life On Earth* where I thought it would be good to do a move from the sunny to the shaded side of the branch. So I pointed the camera upwards, put the fulcrum point under the branch and focused the camera under the branch around to the opposite side of the animal. It was a jerky movement and the BBC loved it."

"My first experience was tying the camera to a stick and I did tracking shots of blue tongue lizards like that, tracking by angling the camera movements to a pre-set position and walking beside them. The crane now does all that. Devices like Steadicam I've found are not only too expensive but almost useless for my kind of work. It would be hard for a one or two man team to pull off a Steadicam shot quickly in the bush. I've found that your elbow is as good as a Steadicam. Hold your arm out at 90 degrees to your body, and you can run all day and the camera weight in your hand and the elbow is enough to smooth out the up and down motion of your body. I find I do most of my tracking shots that way."

THE BEAUTY OF FILM AND THE COMING OF VIDEO

He uses Hi8 EL Bolex cameras almost exclusively, a choice he spends much time justifying to camera operators "who seem horrified that I'm not using something more expensive. In the field the Bolexes are extraordinary, apart from the noise, they offer far more than the other 'sophisticated' cameras like Aaton and Arriflex. I can put any

lens I like on a Bolex. In seconds it can switch speeds even to time lapse, and I find that I vary the speed a lot depending on the degree of magnification and size of the animal. I have instant exposure readings with the through-the-lens measuring of red lenses, endoscopes etc. that don't have diaphragms in their optics."

"For most of our work the noise doesn't matter, and for a lot of it we need more than one camera and I can afford that with Bolexes. I have four electronic Bolex ELs and three others that I use for different situations. (Imagine having seven Arriflexes!) Despite the talk about registration pins, I've done comparisons with other cameras when extracting the images, and the Bolex has never given me image steadiness problems, and a lot of our material has been blown up to 35mm."

"Today we are talking about most of the endoscope seeing the results on video, but there are still a lot of technical releases around. The Film Australia work I've just done on cave birds is having a cinema release at the open house. I did about 90 per cent of the camera work on that and for the sync sound talking heads we used an Aaton. To fit some of my strange lenses to the Aaton we had to rethink the mounting system, but it's impossible to tell where the cameras change over."

This prompted me to ask if he was considering using video cameras when so much of the market was for broadcast. Frazier is enthusiastic about the quality of the smaller cameras he had seen, but said:

"Unfortunately, the BBC people are not interested unless you use one-inch which is hardly a field format (they won't accept Betacam) and prefer film. The advantages for us of video would be instant viewing of rushes in the field, when you've got the chance to redo something. The others are silent and low light capability. The low light is a huge problem, for instance, shooting in rainforests. Against this you don't have high speed or time lapse capability, which is probably only a matter of time. I think it's a case of pieces like the BBC not to consider work on video because all their work goes out on the television



INSIDE STORY Using the endoscope to film inside the stomach



The Wonders Of Life



ANTICS: Filming backstage and onsets on the special bench



screen and you don't need quality better than that of some of the small cameras I've seen.

"For us it would certainly cut the cost of getting wildlife footage, there is still the shooting ratio that people try to stick to for wildlife film. Mine is between 10:1 and 12:1. That was considered exorbitant once, but the BBC have actually gone higher for some productions, 15:1 to 20:1 is not unreasonable especially if you are shooting high speed. That runs away with more, especially with natural history. There is no given time to turn on, or know when something will happen."

"I like film, but there are a lot of disadvantages for our kind of work. Videotape would make videoscopes work very interesting for example. To be able to get into much darker situations, down fire holes etc. I think there is a place for both, I've always thought that we've got to be prepared to make a transition very soon." Among his other cameras is a Photovision Actionmaster 16mm high speed camera. Frazer says "The BBC demands a lot of high speed, as well as a lot of time lapse. It means you have to be a jack of all trades and good at them all. The equipment flexibility is useful for the commercials we get as well. You may remember the M&M's commercial with a strawberry spinning in time lapse, with a pan during it. It took two months to pull off the strawberry, from flower to fruit. There is a nice shot of a bee coming in to land on the flower and then you see the flower drop and form into fruit, go down to ground and open. The setup just to do that was really complex."

"We're doing a lot of time lapse now and I really enjoy it. I've just done 800 feet of time lapse of clouds for film Australia as they had nothing in their library, and I know they've already sold several shots within a week of getting it."

PROJECTS AND PROBLEMS

The Shell series was a critical and popular success, and they had ultimately come up with the goods for Bob Raymond, so Clyne very badly approached the then New South Wales Film Commission for funding for two films. One was about spiders called *Aleas*. Among 66 which won a lot of awards

around the world. It was picked up by the BBC and has had a lot of TV showings.

Because of its success the BBC told Frazer and Clyne about their early plans for *Life On Earth* and asked if they could do some work on it. "No one realised the success that program would be," Frazer said. "After those early films we cut our teeth in a serious way on *Life On Earth* as professionals. We had a lot of fun with the two earlier films (the second film is called *The Garden Jungle*). I was still working at the museum at the time so I spent weekends and nights on it. I was glad when daylight saving came in because it let me leave the museum, head up to Denistown at night and have more hours of daylight (behind the camera). A lot of the spiders and insects were more active at night anyway so it suited the film better to work into the night."

For the *Life On Earth* project they had a visit from David Attenborough and the production crew who briefed them on what they wanted and were then given very much a free hand. They spent two months in Denver and then went to California to film the symbiotic relationship of the yucca moth and plant. From there they came back and covered a wide area of Australia.

Martin Freme contributed more than an hour of on-screen material. Frazer remembers it as "a lot of work and great fun. They paid us well and we have probably done more work now for the BBC than anyone else." Although they don't contribute much to the second series, the *Living Planet*, they went to Sumatra and photographed the world's largest flower, which the BBC wanted to show opening in time lapse. That prompted Frazer with technical problems because it happens high in the trees in dense jungle, away from any electrical power. Frazer worked out beforehand a way of firing the huge three-foot wide flower which took three days to open. "I decided," he said, "to use two cameras in case something went wrong, and I've got a very good electronics technician who helped make a battery-operated device that ran the lights and the camera. We built a huge black plastic tent over the flowers which eliminated the problems of fluctuating daylight. And we literally fired it in the dark." >



CLOSELY WATCHED TRAINING: The home-made ("better than a Looney") crane is used for a sequence on water-folding frogs

"The technical problems they could handle. It was camping in the jungle which was the terrifying experience for them, as there were tigers and rogue elephants around."

FREE SICKNESS AND DISCOMFORT

While not trying to stress the physical difficulties in his work, Pinner mentions such moments offensively. The stories are almost told against himself rather than in an attempt to deter competitors. "Recently," he said, "I got very sick—75 feet up in a tree in North Queensland, swaying in the wind. It was rotten sickness."

He continues, "We probably do a lot more gony things than most filmmakers, otherwise you don't get the sequences on these animals. Most filmmaking is in controlled situations until you get to natural history. I guess that my early experience gives me enough info, and some empathy with the animal, being able to read what a subject is going to do, knowing the animal when you switch the camera on is our greatest asset! Without that you produce superficial films. And the time for that has gone. The BBC people won't accept that kind of program, they want things in depth, with lots of behaviour. And they want it all! They don't want the camera switched on after the action is started."

"I've just told that we are also the models of a lot of wildlife cameramen out there, there's us and Oxford Scientific Films, and we set the early trends and in many ways we have made a rod for our own backs. There are now many people out there doing natural history who are in many ways doing it better. There are some brilliant guys out there and at the risk of sounding repetitive, without exception they have this early training in natural history."

ENDOSCOPES AND ETHICS

Among the projects that Pinner has contributed was one for Doug Stanley of Natural Films about in vitro fertilisation. On this film he spent time at the Queen Victoria Hospital in Melbourne and at Monash University working with the medical team. It was an experience that had a profound effect on him. He describes how he says, "In operating theatres putting endoscopes into women's stomachs, mixing her human stuff under the microscope. It impacted some strong feelings on me that have remained. I still and up in tears when I see the film and hear the music. That film also taught me a lot about what you can or can't do ethically."

"The BBC has a policy of being very tough about how you treat the subjects in front of your camera, and how much stress you place on the animals and things you are filming. That's one of the reasons we lose the BBC. It has ethics and integrity. One of the greatest joys is to be able to film something and to let it go free, and you know you haven't damaged it. It's little heart might have been pumping a bit, but that's all."

"It's not easy, I've had to develop a lot of special foot light sources. I remember that my lights cooked a butterfly egg once. I sat there waiting for four or five hours for the caterpillar and it was rejected. It was one of the very first lessons over seventeen years ago and I can remember I was devastated. I took a look at what lights we had, turning them on only when needed which was inoperative so I started to look at mirrors and reflectors and so on. Now I have a whole lot of things for different situations that keep the heat right off. It also helps keep the subject from crawling off because it's

uncomfortable, especially when you are looking for natural behaviour. Every subject is different and has different things it will react to."

He concludes with a story about how he stopped a shoot on a Japanese production that he was working on as an adviser because they were just getting too rough on the animal. He said to them, "That's it as far as I'm concerned, we either stop filming and you let the animal go or we take a break and have lunch, and please, let the animal calm down! And they did just that! It's very hard to tell this to a crew that are all geared up to shoot, cameramen are the worst, often there is very little thought for the animal."

DEEP FOCUS

Basic mechanical construction is one thing, but most people would stop short of building their own lenses, Pinner again approached it with the need for specialisation that ruled out cutting gear. To get down spider holes or into hollow trees he is faced with problems that most cameramen never encounter. Without any training in optics he has made up his lenses from trial and error.

"It's not just a matter of perspective," he insists, "it's where the animals are. And you have to get down to their level. So I've built up a whole range of lenses that do different things, they are very much purpose-type lens but my own system—I've concentrated on getting extraordinary depth into my images. The difficulty in using the commercial endoscope lenses outside in standard lighting conditions is that they are all about 132 with high speed film and useless in low light. My lenses are achieving that at comfortable light levels. There is a shot I did in the moth film that is 12.5 at a 60th. This is a shot in the rainforest where there is a drop of water in the foreground and the flooded stream in the background. These are the situations I encounter so the equipment has to be adapted to that."

Walking around his workshop studio, Pinner has a story to tell about each item he picked up, a great shot that it enabled him to make, it is as if these shots become part of the equipment, and although some are made specifically for an application

most are modified again to serve another.

A small handwritten label stuck to the barrel of one field spaced tube says "green flag", named, Pinner says, "for a fancy of a shot in Sounds Like Australia with a green flag on a stick with all the water and dead trees in the background—everyone comments on it. It's a deep focus wide angle but without gross distortion."

His pride in the deep focus ability has an element of awe in the face of a magic that he is not sure how he has conjured up. He doesn't tell about how difficult it is to use the lenses' deep focus ability without the extra sharpness adding messy background clutter and detail. When it is used it is for a reason, like the dramatic shot in the tunnel with spider film where the spider is big in foreground, close to the lens and children are playing away in the background, the focus holding the link between them.

Almost never removed from the optical shooting bench is a Tessovar film system adapted from a monocular microscope. It has a diaphragm in it, a 5.1 zoom and a range of magnifications. It will go from a minute scale on a butterfly's wing to a 1:1 ratio. This is so much a standard piece of equipment that Pinner can't imagine filming without it.

"I use a lot of strange optical," he said, playing up another right-angled tube. "This happens to be an eyepiece from a microscope, or I can take it off and use my favourite lens, a 10mm Switar, or I can go 52mm on there. I've got one that is even lower than that, the centre of the lens there about one inch from the end is even 150 high for some things." Picking up another, he goes on, "This one gets a whole lot lower, and I can bury it in the ground. There is a shot in Sounds Like Australia using this where the ants are literally running up and looking at you at their eye level, and Denzay is walking past the ants' nest in focus in the background."

"There is another shot in the lead film where someone adjoined a measurement to the cane load, the the dog on the tuckerbox, so we decided to shoot one. We got a stuffed load and had someone make a descriptive base for it. We went and set it in Cairns in a park and with this lens it looks enormous as if someone

could walk up to it and it would tower over them, yet the cars and the buildings in the background are in focus. Because you have all that depth it allows you to pull off all those trick shots with minimums.

"The BBC invited us to do the first work and set the standards on David Attenborough's new series and we have proceeded all the other shooting by six months. We thought about what we could do to get the standard high and we took a trip through a green ant's nest. We have discovered a whole lot of new behaviour including a butterfly that is impervious to the ants and actually eats them, living in the nest. The green ant is quite a vicious ant — I must have got thousands of stings doing that sequence. We were using this sort of endoscope with a sheath of fibre optics around it that points a whole lot of light out beside the lens. We also used a lot of fibre optics lights pushed into the nest itself. I built barriers around the lens coated with an anti-ant goo to try to stop them crawling up into the eye-piece. Those are the sorts of problems we face, like shooting in water and coming out with legs all bloody from blood. Insects and small flies — it's all part of the down side of our business."

After talking about the economics of long shoots waiting for events, I asked Jim whether he continued to work because it was still a pleasant way to make a living. He paused before he replied,

"It's actually not a good way to make a living at all. People are always offering to carry our bags. We work twice the hours that normal filmmakers would. If something happens at 8am then you have to be there. Like a lot of filmmakers we get sick of flying out of subways, aeroplanes and hotel rooms are all the same after a while.

"I've just spent 30 days sitting 100 feet up a tree, peering out a hole or a hole in the forest to get a sequence for David Attenborough and I've got everything except the very important occupation at the end of the sequence. You actually get pretty depressed after a while. You think 'why are I there, am I leading the subject wrong? You try and figure out shortcuts to ease the boredom. This particular bird has several stunts that he used to display himself on

So we went about eliminating most of them so that he would use the one in front of the camera. He became very tame — we could poke our heads out of the hide and say 'Look here butter, do your thing' and he'd stay put. Unfortunately the females he'd coped in, won't. We'll get the footage, because the nerve of the game is perseverance, but we have to go back. I had to come home and it happened on the day I left. This so often happens that I've always wanted to write a book titled, 'You should have been here last week'. I can cite dozens of stories where we should have been there last week and it's a difficult thing to organise, commitments, travel, long distances and when you have seasonal and weather barriers.

"We rely on a network of field information, of friends in the field that keep their eyes on things and give us the important clues as to when to arrive at a place to get what we want. Their local knowledge of weather is better than just watching a weather map as they have the local seasonal knowledge. The difference for us can be several points of rain that may make or break when we go somewhere. A lot of the things we have to get for David Attenborough's *World Of Life* are crisscross into the September, October, November period, while we all have over winter. The criteria of providing new and interesting material also means that you are limited."

Periscope

1. Can you remember the shot in Alan Parker's film *The Wall* where the Doctor's deprogramming is made to show him a mass, unrecognisable city from his *Murphy's Law* World? What about the shot of the people dancing in the street? This was another shot taken from a hide. How did they do it? They used the optical principle of periscope. For David's film *The World Is Our Home* he did more.
2. Another team helped Mirage periscope and optical effects manufacturer Paul Roberts, with his optical approved 50 film project. They are using two endoscope lenses attached to give a 3-D macrophotography view in stereo.
3. Endoscope lens. A long red line periscope principle was designed for scientific, medical and industrial use. One finds it a topography lens is where the lens is attached into holes and will give a wide angle view from the end. Architects can make it around a model at their building and allow a human point of view. For medical use it usually has a sheath of fibre optics that allow light to illuminate the subject from the tip.

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Model(s) for the original idea	Lucy Fokien
to	Caroline Matus
Photographer	Ken Lipp
Stylist(s)	Ken Lipp
Editor	Ken Lipp
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FILMBUFFS DIARY

MARCH

- 1 **1964** Jackie Coogan dies from heart failure and kidney ailments. Santa Monica, California. A popular child performer from the age of 16 months, he played the orphan in *Charley the Kid* (1937). His parents misappropriated his childhood earnings of more than \$4 million, leading to the prosecution of the so-called Coogan Act, which set up court-administered trust funds to safeguard the interests of juvenile performers.
- 2 **1933** Paramount's *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, starring Fredric March and Myrna Loy, wins Oscars at Sydney's Prince Edward Theatre.
- 3 **1971** Joan Harlow (Harlow Carpenter) born, Kansas City, Missouri.
- 4 **1978** Charles Chaplin knighted, Buckingham Palace, London.
- 5 **1962** John Belushi found dead in a drug overdose. Chelsea's Westmont Hotel, Hollywood.
- 6 **1969** Carolyn Law Cole (Mrs. Quinn-Crawford) born, Paterson, New Jersey.
- 7 **1967** Waldo Salt, screenwriter (*Times Square* 1959; *Midnight Cowboy* 1969), dies. Los Angeles.
- 8 **1960** Otto Heller, director of photography (*The Magnificent Seven* 1960), dies. 1955. Ate 1960, born Prague.
- 9 **1929** Sydney's Regent Theatre opens with *The Flash and The Devil*, starring Greta Garbo and John Gilbert.
- 10 **1962** Arthur Honegger, composer, pianist (1905-1955), born La Hève, France.
- 11 **1931** Warner Brothers' *Boys* releases *42nd Street*, starring Norman Krasna and Bobe Darin.
- 12 **1945** Jim Swenson, director (*The Madly Hysterical Picture Show* 1975; *The Night The Hawk* 1979), born Sydney.
- 13 **1966** Hans-Joachim Roedelius (*Out of a Blue* 1970; *Out of a Blue* 1977), born Oct 1939, born Sacramento, California.
- 14 **1978** Susan Hayward (Julius), Marjorie Day, of a brain tumor, Los Angeles.
- 15 **1939** Charles Chauvel's first sound film, *The Wake of the Gullies*, premieres at Sydney's Prince Edward Theatre.
- 16 **1940** Bernardo Bertolucci director born Parma, Italy.
- 17 **1928** Brigitte Hehn (Gale Gale, *Schindler's List* 1993) actress, remembered for her debut in Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* (1929), born Berlin.
- 18 **1965** Robert Donat born Wellington, New Zealand, England.
- 19 **1960** Australian-born Hollywood actress Louise Lavelle (Louise Latham aka Louise Latham) dies (Taiwan).
- 20 **1962** World premiere of *The War Game*, Sydney's New State Cinema, Islandville, Victoria.
- 21 **1968** Media Magnate Rupert Murdoch (Australia) nationalized in Twentieth Century-Fox Film Corporation in \$525,000 million sale.
- 22 **1945** Almost a year before the United States has officially entered the Second World War, James Stewart becomes the first major movie star to sign up with the military forces.
- 23 **1975** Akira Kurosawa, director, born Tokyo, Japan.
- 24 **1965** US female animator who designed Mickey Mouse for the Disney studio, born, Kansas City, Missouri.
- 25 **1921** Simone Signoret (Simone Signoret), born, Wiesbaden, Germany.
- 26 **1965** Chris Rafferty (John Wilson, *Robbie* 1965), born Broken Hill, NSW.
- 27 **1967** Steve Swenson (Steve Swenson), born, Chicago, Illinois.
- 28 **1967** Male von Trapp, singer, actor, whose life and family were inspiration for the play and film *The Sound of Music*, dies. Copley Hospital, Montclair, Vermont.
- 29 **1965** Harry Fox, leader and surviving member of the Fox Brothers' nightclub, considered who appeared in many musicals of the 1930s and 1940s, died. New York, New York.
- 30 **1977** Warren Sully (Warren Sully), born, Richmond, Virginia.
- 31 **1965** Volker Schlöndorff, director, born, West Berlin, Germany.

APRIL

- 1 **1955** Alvin Karpis (Alvin Karpis), criminal, remembered as the criminal opposite Voltaire in *Good and Beautiful* (1935), born New York City.
- 2 **1966** Raymond Langford, director, dies. Sydney. Who spent his final years as a right-wing extremist on the waterfront.
- 3 **1924** Milton Brando born, Omaha, Nebraska.
- 4 **1958** Lini, Turner's long-lost, living daughter, is believed to have been in her Beverly Hills home. Her daughter, Cheryl, is later acquired on the grounds of a suitable marriage.
- 5 **1968** Roger (William) Corneil, producer-director who became King of the B Movie in the 1960s, born Los Angeles.
- 6 **1968** Universal Studios releases *Ferry Gordon*, starring Larry (Shirley) Gordon and Joan Garon.
- 7 **1967** Abel Gance's *Napoléon* premieres. Theatre National de l'Opéra, Paris.
- 8 **1968** C.Y. Ho, Hamburg, journalist, in partnership with Sydney's *The Sun* (1968), born New York City.
- 9 **1965** Louis Derrell, resident of Los Angeles, is a house fire which killed his son, a daughter, Glenore, Chicago.
- 10 **1932** Orin Stuart (Michael Sheehan), born, Australia, Egypt.
- 11 **1947** Chaplin's *Modern Times* premieres. Broadway Theatre, New York.
- 12 **1968** Canadian actress Patty Andrews, acquired in the rape and murder of actress Victoria Rappé in September 1968.
- 13 **1947** Benjamin Tison, Mexican, director/producer, whose pioneering efforts led to a legacy of exploitation, showing sexuality in a manner between 1957 and 1960, born Mexico City. His daughter, Carmen, died from a car accident in Mexico City (1958).
- 14 **1932** Anthony Perkins, born, New York City.
- 15 **1968** Carla (Karl) Burkhart, director (*The Blue Sky* 1981), also *24th* (Thelma), born, Warren, Ohio.
- 16 **1948** Paul Cox, director, born, New Zealand.
- 17 **1914** George W. Davis, of director (*It's About Time* 1958), born New York City.
- 18 **1967** Hugh Dixon, film editor (*The American* 1958), born, New York City.
- 19 **1975** Georgia, long-lost, living daughter, is believed to have been in her Beverly Hills home. Her daughter, Cheryl, is later acquired on the grounds of a suitable marriage.
- 20 **1968** A walk-in part in his first feature movie, *Henry*, Pollock's entry into pictures.
- 21 **1975** Mrs. Rose (John) Gordon (William Gordon), leading character in *The American* 1958, born New York City.
- 22 **1966** Mary (Shirley) Gordon (Mary Gordon), born, New Jersey.
- 23 **1968** Charlotte Gordon, producer at *The American* 1958, born, New York City.
- 24 **1964** Shirley MacLaine (Shirley MacLaine), born, Richmond, Virginia.
- 25 **1965** George Satter, director, with an obsession of seeing himself, Barcelona.
- 26 **1964** Mary (Shirley) Gordon, producer at *The American* 1958, born, New York City.
- 27 **1968** Master Loni, created cartoon producer and creator and voice of Woody Woodpecker, born, New Rochelle, New York.
- 28 **1917** Robert Anderson, playwright/director (*The American* 1958; *The American* 1958), born New York City.
- 29 **1964** Rondo Hatton, actor who suffered from a disease which distorted his face, skull, hands and feet, and was the inspiration for the character in *The Creature from the Black Lagoon* (1954), born, Maryland.
- 30 **1918** Eric Jorden (Eric Jorden), born, New York City.



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